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May 2014
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GoodFood

MIDDLE EAST



Tasty travels

Discover gourmet destinations this holiday season

Eat healthy

From Sun-to-Sat

SWEET SPOT

Rekindle memories with our nostalgic bakes

KEEP IT *simple*

Stylish yet stress-free weekend entertaining

INSIDE

Kitchen Special

Give your kitchen a style update!

CPI MEDIA GROUP

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Garden Party

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BBC GoodFood MIDDLE EAST

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Welcome!



One of my favourite things about a holiday is the planning ahead. Of course, the actual holiday is usually the best part, but isn't it fun to prolong the excitement before and after with all the making of plans and looking at photos afterwards? With the summer holiday season approaching, there's no better time to start planning your travels – unless you're super-organised and have everything locked down already! – and we've got all the inspiration you need in this Travel Special issue.

It is an undeniable truth that more and more people are travelling for food, or are at least making food a central part of their holiday itineraries, whether it's investing in a cooking class or simply trying out the local cuisine and well-known restaurants. Confirmed foodies are taking things a step further with planning entire trips around food-focussed activities, some of them quite unusual. And options for such travels abound, as research for our *Adventures for the gourmet globe-trotter* feature revealed – we've picked out the ones we think are most interesting, find them on p74.

If such adventures may not be a realistic option right now and you're after more of a family holiday, we uncover the culinary secrets of one of Britain's coastal stars, North Norfolk, in p80, and travel to Australian wine country in Hunter Valley (*On a gastronomic hunt!* p78). On the other hand, if all the holidaying you can spare is a long weekend – or are simply itching for a break *right now*! – then the UAE has a surprising attraction of its own, find out more in *Plan a summer stay-cation*, p84.

Our other special feature this month is focussed on kitchens. From inspiring designer kitchens, expert tips, and low-effort makeover ideas, to beautiful tableware and accessories to instantly update the high-use space that is your kitchen (I *love* the *A day in the life of a kitchen* shoot, p49, with a very talented team behind it) – it's all here in our Kitchen Special.

And of course, as always, there's no dearth of ideas when it comes to what to cook in your newly revamped kitchen! Steer yourself towards eating healthier in *Eat well all week* – we've got seven days' worth of healthy recipes this month (p24); make entertaining easier with James Martin's relaxed recipes (*Easy Thursday night*, p40); or bake a nostalgia-tinged dessert from *Tuck shop treats* (p44).

Have a delicious month, and happy travels!

Sudeshna

Editor's picks



This bright pitcher screams summer style! p8



Add luxury to your herbal teas with these Persian saffron-infused versions, p33



The Hunter Valley should be on every foodie's list when visiting Australia, p80

BBC GoodFood MIDDLE EAST

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BBC GoodFood MIDDLE EAST

Contents







✳STARTERS

6 YOUR SAY
Write in to us with your views and comments.

8 FOODIE FILE
All the latest food news, trends and happenings.

11 AISLE FILE
Go shopping for kitchen gadgets, and gorgeous home décor.

12 HERE TO HELP
Expert answers for your cooking questions.

13 CULINA-READS
Cookbooks, TV shows and app reviews.

14 DOHA DIARIES
The latest in Doha's dining scene.

15 TRIED AND TASTED: CONTEMPORARY BRITISH
We review two of the UAE's top tables.

16 FLAVOURS OF THE MONTH
The best restaurant promotions and offers this month.

✳HOME COOKING

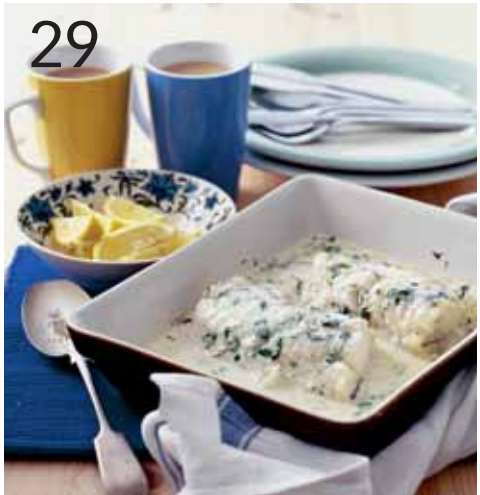
20 MAKE IT TONIGHT
Effortless, yet delicious suppers for weeknights.

24 EAT WELL ALL WEEK
Healthy recipes for seven days.

29 ONE-POT WONDERS
All-in-one dishes that will soon become family favourites.

32 5 WAYS TO TOP A SPUD
Tasty toppings for jacket potatoes.

33 KITCHEN NOTES
Essential knowhow for home chefs.





34 LEARN TO: COOK MUSSELS
Working with this popular shellfish is easier than you think!

36 MODERN MIDDLE EASTERN
Arabic dishes given a lighter twist.

40 EASY THURSDAY NIGHT
Relaxed entertaining ideas from James Martin's Kitchen.

44 TUCK SHOP TREATS
Revisit childhood indulgences with these decadent bakes.

May 2014

✳KITCHEN SPECIAL



49 A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A KITCHEN
Whatever the meal, style your kitchen with covetable tableware and appliances.

56 MY KITCHEN: SHAIKHA AL ALI
Check out this Emirati food blogger's chic, colourful kitchen.

58 GADGET SPOTLIGHT
The hottest new appliances you can shop for.

60 MY KITCHEN: CAMILLA SCHNEIDEMAN
The culinary school director shows us around her stylish and functional kitchen.

62 SMART, SIMPLE KITCHEN MAKEOVERS
Giving your kitchen a facelift is easy with these clever ideas from the experts.

✳GOURMET LIFESTYLE

SUMMER TRAVEL SPECIAL

66 3'S A TREND: TAPAS
We take a look at a new foodie trend in town.

68 DO WE NEED MORE THAN 5-A-DAY?
Everything you need to know about managing your fruit and vegetable intake.

70 KITCHIN CONFIDENTIAL
Michelin-star chef Tom Kitchin tells us his tales from the kitchen.

73 TASTE OF THE WORLD
Travel news and global gastronomy.

74 ADVENTURES FOR THE GOURMET GLOBE-TROTTER
Unique culinary escapades for foodie travellers.

78 ON A GASTRONOMIC HUNT!
We discover the gourmet delights of the Hunter Valley in Australia.



80 DISCOVER NORTH NORFOLK
Must-visit restaurants and shops in this British destination.

84 PLAN A SUMMER STAY-CATION
An island getaway in the UAE.

86 DOHA DISCOVERY
The best places to dine at in the city.

88 CULINARY CELEBRATIONS IN DOHA
A look back at the fifth Qatar Internationall Food Festival.

96 MEET THE BLOGGER
Get to know the face behind the food blog you've been savouring.

COMPETITIONS & OFFERS

WIN!

83 Weekend break at Ocreanic Khorfakkan Resort and Spa.
90 A luxury break in St. Regis Doha
94 Dining and brunch vouchers for UAE restaurants, and a hotel stay.

Our recipe descriptions

V Suitable for vegetarians
You can freeze it
Not suitable for freezing
Easy Simple recipes even beginners can make
A little effort These require a bit more skill and confidence – such as making pastry
More of a challenge Recipes aimed at experienced cooks
Low fat 12g or less per portion
Low cal 500 calories or less per main.
Superhealthy Low in saturated fat, 5g or less per portion; low in salt, 1.5g or less; and at least one of the following: provides one-third or more of your daily requirement of fibre, iron, calcium, folic acid and/or vitamin C, or counts at least one portion of your recommended 5-a-day fruit and veg.
Good for you Low in saturated fat, low in salt.
Heart healthy Low in saturated fat, with 5g or less, and low in salt, with 1.5g or less, and high in omega-3 fatty acids
1 of 5-a-day The number of portions of fruit and/or veg contained in a serving
Vit C **Iron** **Omega-3** **Calcium** **Folate** **Fibre**
Indicating recipes that are good sources of useful nutrients
GLUTEN FREE Indicates a recipe is free from gluten

Some recipes contain pork & alcohol. These are clearly marked and are for non-Muslims only. Look for these symbols:
P Contains pork
Contains alcohol

Cover photo from Shutterstock.com

Store Directory

Contact numbers for outlets featured in this issue

2XL Furniture: 04-2888071
Al Ghandi Electronics: 04-2570007
Better Life showroom: 04-3414868
Bloomingdale's-Dubai: 04-3505333
Crate and Barrel: 04-3990125
Daiso: 04-4503739
Fiore Rosso: 04-3385045
Guy Degrenne: 04-3440354
Harvest Home: 04-3420225
Home Centre: 04-3414441
Indigo Living: 04-3466934
Jashanmal stores: 04-3471715/02-6456454
Lafayette Gourmet: 04-3399933
Lakeland: 04-3236081
Miele: 04-3418444
Nespresso: 04-3399092
Samsung: 04-3399504
Tavola: 04-3402933
TWG Tea Salon and Boutique: 04-3253857
Zara Home: 04-4380650

Note: Prices in Qatari Riyals are approximately the same as UAE Dirhams.

Your say

We love to hear from you!

COMPETITION QUEEN



I am a *BBC Good Food ME* Food Club member and am so happy to get all the information, whether it's related to the masterclasses, or recipes, cooking tips, and contests in the newsletter. When I saw the Crate and Barrel cooking competition with *BBC Good Food ME*, I sent in a healthy recipe and was thrilled to see my name in the top 12 short-listed entries who had to battle it out at the Taste of Dubai event. I was not lucky to get into the finals as the cook-off was so challenging. Nonetheless, it was fun and I made many foodie friends. I was so glad to see that the magazine put all the pictures from the event in the April issue (*Ready in 25!*). I would like to thank *BBC Good Food ME* Magazine for coming up with such great competitions and as everybody said, this cook off was the attraction of Taste of Dubai festival. Truly, I am very proud to be a part of it. Thanks to you and Crate and Barrel Middle East for hosting it. I look forward to receiving my monthly issues.

Hannah Joji

TREATS FOR KIDS

My kids and I love hot cross cookies and always buy them from the store. I saw a recipe for it in the April issue (*Celebrate Easter*) and made it in no time – the ingredients aren't expensive and most kitchens have them already. I can now make these whenever my kids crave cookies. I've also taken off cookies from my grocery list, as mine are more delicious!

Dounia Taha

Win!

The writer of the Star Letter wins a **Tefal Actifry** with snack grid, **worth Dhs999**. The new Actifry is now available in a bigger size (1.2kg) from Tefal, the small kitchen appliance company, and comes with a snack grid which allows you to cook things like kebbe, chicken nuggets, samosa, and other fries with just one spoon of oil (you don't need oil at all for frozen food). It's the perfect way to enjoy fried foods cooked a healthier way, without losing out on flavour!



Star Letter

RECIPE FOR ROMANCE



Being broke when you have a girlfriend isn't the best thing that can happen to you. Especially when it's her birthday! I had no funds for a lavish dinner date and was looking for the best way to improvise, and then I came across *BBC Good Food ME* at my sister's place. Being a Keralite, imagine my excitement at seeing the Kerala Breakfast as the winning recipe (*Awards special feature*, March 2014). That was a eureka moment! I decided to forget the boring steak and wine concept, and go back to our roots by cooking her a Keralite feast for her birthday and literally cooked up a storm. Not only was it kind on my wallet, it turned out to be the best Keralite meal she'd had in a long time. *BBC Good Food ME*, I think it is safe to say that I really owe you one – Thank you!

Jizwin Youseph Kutty



MEMORIES OF CHOCOLATE

Ever since my brother and I watched the animated movie Polar Express, we've been looking for hot chocolate that looks as decadent and warming as the one they indulge in, in the movie. When I saw the chocolate soup recipe (*Chocolate, but not as you know it*, April 2013) I knew I had to make it one evening when he came over to visit. It was absolutely delicious, had just the right consistency, and exactly what we imagine the characters in the movie had! Thank you *BBC Good Food ME* for this mouthwatering, chocolate-y recipe.

Ellaine Rosco

TALK TO US!

Email us on feedback@bbcgoodfoodme.com with your thoughts, views and comments.

You can also connect with us on social media! Find us on:

@bbcgoodfoodmiddleeast **@bbcgoodfoodme**

Or, you could write to us at:
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From our social media pages

- I made meatballs from @BBCGoodFoodME over the weekend. I can see them becoming firm favourites here! – *Jo Wotton*
- Just made hot cross buns – very proud of myself – *Malis Allis*
- Happiness is receiving a copy of BBC Good Food ME! Nothing acts as a greater pick-me-up on an otherwise gloomy work day! – *Saloni Jolly-Banga*

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Foodie file

What's hot and happening in the culinary world, here and around the globe.


Nay Restaurant


Burger Joint

DINE IN THE CITY

✳ Indulge in fusion Lebanese mezze like pistachio and cumin hummous, as well as charcoal grills and raw meat dishes, at Nay Restaurant Lounge in DIFC. The venue boasts an outdoor terrace – for shisha – and a resident DJ and live band too. It's perfect for a relaxed evening with friends! Call 04-3516600.

✳ Those working in, or near, Dubai Media City can head out for lunch or an espresso at newly opened Lounge Café Italiano, a contemporary Italian eatery with a touch of the Mediterranean. Try the pizza Napoletana or homemade ravioli filled with beef or chicken roast in a butter sage sauce. Call 04-4533318.

✳ Celebrated chef and restaurateur Wolfgang Puck is set to open his first outlet in the Middle East and it has Dubai foodies ecstatic! His award-winning modern American steak restaurant, Cut, opens this month at The Address Downtown Dubai. Expect dishes like prime dry-and wet-aged beef, 100 per cent Japanese Wagyu, roasted fish, and creamed spinach with fried organic egg and soft polenta with parmesan. Call 04-8883444.

✳ Award-winning NYC eatery Burger Joint New York has joined the extensive list of new restaurants at the new strip mall in Jumeirah, City Walk Dubai. Inspired by the back alleys of the Big Apple, complete with fire escapes and a street lamp, the restaurant knows what it's good at, and serves just that – only two kinds of burgers, cooked the way you want, with a choice of toppings. Call 04-3444459.

Duck down under!

Heston Blumenthal, one of the most renowned celebrity chefs and owner of three-Michelin-starred restaurant, The Fat Duck, is relocating his restaurant to Australia. The chef will temporarily close his restaurant in Bray, UK, and set up at the Crown Towers hotel in Southbank, Melbourne, for six months from February 2015 onwards. The chef is taking his team along with him, and will be opening his new restaurant, Dinner by Heston Blumenthal, at the same hotel once The Fat Duck relocates back to the UK. The move is to commemorate The Fat Ducks' 20th anniversary in 2015, and fulfill Heston's dream of opening up an outpost in Australia.

17 kg



The weight of the world's biggest cookbook, *Ma Cuisine Française* (Laymon), from three-Michelin star chef, Yannick Alléno. Only 1,000 copies of the French cookbook, which features 500 recipes over 1,200 pages, are available. € 1,500 (approximately Dhs7,600), available from www.macuisinefrancaise.com.



This just in:

Serve sangria or fresh juices in this Mario Luca Giusti 'Palla' pitcher – we love the vibrant pink colour which makes it ideal for summer pool parties! Dhs250 at Bloomingdale's Home Dubai.

Compiled by NICOLA MONTEATH | Photographs SUPPLIED, SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Top chef



There's nothing we like more than helping budding chefs – and there's a lot of them out there, we know! – realise their culinary dreams, and that's why we are delighted to bring you the Samsung Aspiring Chef competition in association with BBC Good Food Middle East. The unique cookery competition is open to amateur chefs keen to make a mark, and the grand prize winner will get to walk away with loads of exciting prizes including Samsung appliances and a culinary training course from the School of Culinary & Finishing Arts. All you need to do is submit an original recipe, the shortlisted entries will then get to cook live at a daylong event next month, which everyone is invited to – there will be cooking demos from professional chefs, blogger talk sessions and goodie bags for everyone! Details on Samsung.com/aspiringchef.

#What's trending



#whiteasparagus
This spring vegetable is popping up on menus across the UAE, and our twitter feeds! Crowne Plaza Dubai recently posted a collage of four white asparagus dishes from their spring menu on Instagram while others suggested recipe ideas on Twitter, and posted snapshots of the vegetable with fresh dill, chives and lemon, as soldiers for eggs, and a side to smoked apple wood cured duck – interesting! We love that people are now eating more seasonal produce.

Home



Save the Dates

May 23-31

The annual Restaurant week from the Jumeirah group of hotels is back for the third year, from May 23-31, and spans over one week, across ten cities around the world, and includes more than 60 restaurants and 30 cuisines. Get a chance to try special set menus from Tortuga Kitchen and Bar (shown here), Alta Badia at Jumeirah Emirates Towers, and a selection of restaurants at the Burj Al Arab, among others - all at competitive prices. Set menus are priced from Dhs90 onwards, visit www.jumeirah.com/restaurantweek.com.

"You could probably get through life without knowing how to roast a chicken, but the questions is, would you want to?"

- TV presenter and cookbook author Nigella Lawson

CULTURE VULTURES

The UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage List focuses on intangible cultural elements that need to be preserved, in order to keep a nation's heritage alive. The list includes communities, festivals, art, and even culinary traditions. Most recently, Washoku, a Japanese traditional cuisine, and Korean Kimchi was added to the list, which has previously honoured French and Mexican cuisines. Washoku highlights special, time-intensive cooking techniques that have been passed down for generations while Kimjang, the art of making and sharing Kimchi (traditional pickled vegetable side dishes) is Korea's gift to the world of gastronomy.



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AND A FUSION OF FLAVOURS AT MAZINA
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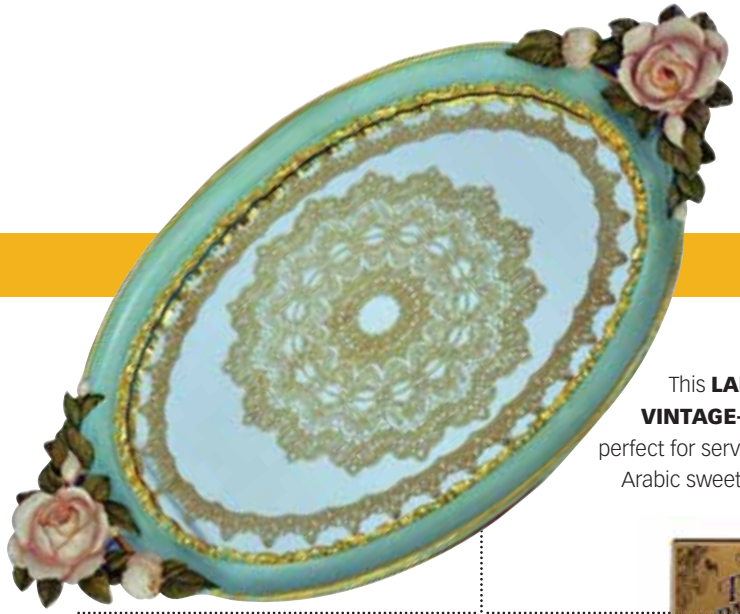
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WHERE *life* HAPPENS

Aisle file

Gorgeous gourmet buys, kitchen gear, home décor and more.



This **LARGE CERAMIC VINTAGE-STYLE TRAY** is perfect for serving canapés and Arabic sweets. Dhs89 at **2XL**.



Forget over-processed packet crisps, with this **MINI CHIP KIT** you can make crunchy crisps at home in minutes. The kit includes a mini mandolin and two non-stick silicone trays, so you can get perfectly cut chips each time. Simply slice and cook in the microwave. We can't wait to try apple and sweet potato crisps in this! Dhs150 at **LAKELAND**.



Bring the garden feel indoors by placing this beautiful wooden **BRANCHES TEA LIGHT HOLDER** on your coffee table. Dhs75 at **ZARA HOME**.



Fill your home with the aromas of sweet violet and handpicked green-tea buds, as you light this **TEA-INFUSED SCENTED CANDLE** that's perfect for spring. Dhs310 at **TWG TEA SALON AND BOUTIQUE**.



This **GOLD FRUIT BASKET** from **HOME CENTRE** is stylish and functional, and makes a great gift too. Dhs25.



Make the most of the last of the alfresco weather with this stylish wicker **DESIGN-SHADE DAY BED** from **FIORE ROSSO'S** Skyline collection. Cocktails and nibbles for weekend lounging not included! Dhs18,500.



Stack recipe cards in this **FABRIC STORAGE POCKET** and have them handy hanging on a cabinet door in your kitchen. Dhs7 at **DAISO**.

ON THE **STORE FRONT**



FORTNUM & MASON

London's well-loved gourmet store has opened its first outlet in Dubai and we couldn't be more excited. Tucked away by The Dubai Mall, the standalone three-storied glass building offers a wide array of their own-brand foodie products, including signature teas and baked goods, as well as beautiful accessories – there's everything from teacups to picnic baskets and even candles and soaps. Upstairs is the Tea Salon, where you can enjoy breakfast, lunch and of course, classic afternoon tea, overlooking the Dubai Fountain, while the top floor houses an ice cream parlour. If it's good enough for the royals, it's certainly good enough for us! Call 04-3882627.

Compiled by NICOLA MONTEATH; SUDESHNA GHOSH | Photographs SUPPLIED



Here to help

Our expert chef Andy Campbell offers practical advice to tackle all your cooking dilemmas.

Q I tried a delicious almond-crusted halibut recently and want to recreate it at home. Please tell me how to make it, without making the crust oily?

A. I use a combination of dried breadcrumbs to absorb the oils, parmesan cheese to enhance the taste, and walnuts as I like their flavour. For this, process two slices of dried bread, two tablespoons of parmesan cheese and ⅓ cup of walnuts, to make fine crumbs. Coat the fish in a whisked egg white, sprinkle the crumb mixture on top and cook until golden brown on both sides.

Q What's the best way to roast duck and have the skin crisp, but flesh soft and tender?

A. I always prick the skin over with a fork and place it on a wire rack in a roasting tray with the breast side up. To get the skin crisp and perfect, I pour 2 cups of boiling water over the duck, allow it to cool, pat dry with kitchen paper and then rub in a tablespoon of salt with a tablespoon of five-spice mix. Roast in a preheated oven at 190C for two hours 15 minutes, turning every 45 minutes. Turn the heat up to 220C and cook for a further 5-7 minutes until the skin is crispy. Remove from the oven and keep in a warm place to let the duck rest rest for 10-15 minutes before carving.



Q I love seaweed crisps and was wondering how to make them. Any suggestions?

A. It's super easy to make seaweed crisps at home. Rub nori sheets with a tablespoon each of sesame oil and canola or rapeseed oil and toss in a tablespoon of sea salt. On medium heat, toast each side in a dry frying pan for 45 seconds. Allow to cool and store in an airtight container.

Q What's the right way to cook barley without making it mushy?

A. I treat it the same way I cook short grain rice. Dry roast a cup of barley in a pan to give it a nutty flavour and then add two finely sliced leeks and 100ml of white verjuice. On low heat, gradually add 4 cups of vegetable broth, a ladle at a time, and cook for 20-30 minutes. Garnish with herbs or parmesan cheese. Roasting it beforehand keeps it from becoming mushy later on.

Q How do I keep quesadillas or burritos from becoming soggy, after filling them, for packed lunches?

We Love!

A. It's best to deseed cucumbers and tomatoes before cutting them into strips. Place the strips in a colander with a little salt, to remove the excess moisture in the vegetables, and dry on a kitchen towel before filling the burrito, quesadilla, or even a sandwich.

Q I sampled black garlic at a food festival recently and would like to know how to use it in a dish?

A. Black garlic is more of a caramelised garlic that is made through an ageing process. I like using it as an alternative to truffles for scrambled eggs, or with grilled fish.

Andy's ingredient of the month

I've been using locally grown heritage plum, cherry vine and golden cherry tomatoes in gazpachos, soups and sauces a lot of late. I've also dried a few of them to use as sun-dried tomatoes in a salad. Available in most leading supermarkets.



Menu planner

Whip up a delicious meal with recipes from this issue

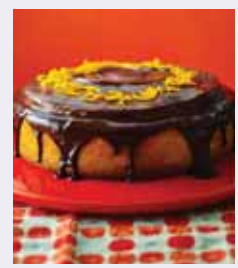
Family get-together



Let everyone dip into a big bowl of Mussels with tomatoes & chilli, p34



Spicy oven-baked chicken & chips is fuss-free and popular, p22



Unleash the kids and your own inner child on the Giant jaffa orange cake, p45

Compiled by NICOLA MONTEATH | Photographs PHOTOS.COM

Culina-reads

Reviews of the latest cookbooks, food shows and mobile apps.

On my bookshelf. . .



We ask the pros to tell us about the cookbook they can't live without.

Tom Egerton, Senior Executive sous chef at Grosvenor House Dubai

Gordon Ramsay's Sunday Lunch and other recipes from the F word (Quadrille) brings back so many memories and ideas from being back in England. The recipes are not over-complicated but bring some great ingredients together and a wide range of cooking techniques that are suited to both non-professional and professional chefs. My copy is signed by Gordon, so it's doubly special!

Watch this:



EAT STREET
Daily on Nat Geo People HD at various times

Since street food is still nothing more than a glint in some foodies' eyes in the region, why not watch this show, which travels across North America highlighting the vibrant food truck scene there? Presented by comedian James Cunningham, the mouthwatering Eat Street showcases trucks specialising in everything from burgers to Korean food, with soundbytes from the owners, local foodies and delighted customers.

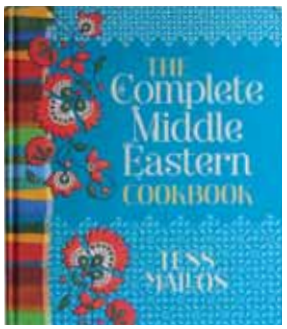
Download this:

Avocado *free for iPhone and Android*

Not strictly a food app, but more of a way of staying connected with your partner – we find it most useful for sharing grocery lists with each other! – this practical tool offers the option of creating multiple lists that can be privately shared between two people. You can update your shopping lists in real-time, share a calendar with reminders of family events and dinner dates, and enjoy instant messaging. It also has other cool features such as sending hugs and sharing photos.

Text SUDESHNA GHOSH | Photographs SUPPLIED, ANAS CHERUR

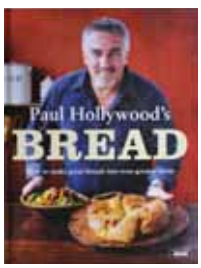
The Complete Middle Eastern cookbook
by Tess Mallos *(Hardie grant books)*



A formidable heavyweight of a book – literally and figuratively – the book was first published as long ago as 1979, and reprinted with updates recently, but has lost none of its relevance since. Greek-Australian food writer Tess has successfully taken on the mammoth task of faithfully recreating the complex, intricate world of Middle Eastern food with this book. Her choice of what counts as Middle Eastern in terms of region may be seen as controversial, but she more than justifies it with in-depth research, showing how history has led to each of these cuisines influencing each other. Much more than a compilation of recipes, the book is divided into chapters by country, travelling from her native Greece, to Cyprus, Turkey, Armenia, Egypt, Yemen, Iraq, the Gulf, Iran, and even Afghanistan, making its scope unrivalled in culinary publishing. Each chapter delves into the history of the region, painting a vivid picture into what went into the evolution of its cuisine, followed by traditional recipes. The Gulf states are combined into one chapter to cover UAE, Qatar and so on, as are Syria, Lebanon and Jordan, as, Tess, while acknowledging their subtle variations, also describes how the cuisines overlap at so many levels. Not all the recipes are accompanied by images, but the ones that are, truly bring the cuisines to life; in others, cute illustrations do the job. With a useful glossary, and introduction to basic ingredients and techniques, the book, while primarily aimed at Western kitchens, is undoubtedly an eye-opening read for Middle Eastern cooks as well.

Dhs199, available at Jashanmal bookstores

Paul Hollywood's bread (Bloomsbury)



When baking guru (and BBC chef) Paul Hollywood tells you he will reveal his bread-making secrets, you're inclined to listen! With the growing interest in quality, artisanal bread, the book is a true celebration of this versatile staple eaten around the world, in its different avatars; the recipes are not just of different varieties of bread, but also dishes that can be made with the bread or to accompany it, to make a complete meal (soups, curries, toppings and puddings). Starting with classic breads, including the medieval era Trencher bread, the chapters go on to cover soda breads, flatbreads, sourdough breads and more, with step-by-step guides and Paul regularly reassuring you that it is easier to master than it seems – as long as the basics are right. With the final chapter on enriched breads aimed more at experienced bakers, this book is as useful for those attempting making bread for the first time, to baking maestros.

Dhs149, at Jashanmal bookstores

Sushi at home – the beginner's guide to perfect, simple sushi
by Yuki Gomi *(Penguin)*



Japanese in spirit and in appearance, this book is a bible for sushi lovers. London-based Cordon bleu-trained Japanese chef Yuki, who is known for her cooking classes, not only pours all her years of knowledge and experience into this book, but also offers a reverential insight into the unique culture that is sushi (it's so much more than just a type of food). Starting with an introduction to sushi, the book goes on to cover sushi-related lingo, equipment required and so on. And then come the recipes. Who knew there were so many varieties? With descriptions of each variety, and step-by-step pictorials where required, the book is quintessentially Japanese-style clean and minimalist in design, with quirky illustrations to accompany. There's also a menu planner towards the end, which helps identify which recipes work together. For all those fans of sushi who were wary of attempting it at home, this is book is a must.

Dhs110, available at Jashanmal bookstores

The Doha diaries

Our Doha-based columnist has her finger on the pulse of the city's foodie scene.

Cheese, please!

Cheese is probably the reason I started blogging about food and it also fuels many of my recent travel adventures. And here's a deep, dark secret – I actually don't like chocolates or sweets. For me, cheese is the perfect end to a meal. Or just a meal in itself. I have also been known to work for cheese. Luckily for me, Doha is a city that loves its chees and I am not short of fromageries to feed my addiction. Here are some of my favourite cheese spots:

Jones the Grocer: There were levels of hysteria when this Doha outpost of the Australia café/delicatessen chain opened a couple of years ago. Primarily because it boasted a dedicated cheese cave. This walk-in cold room is home to a changing variety of cheese, with an emphasis on French and British; although a recent visit garnered me some silky soft Burrata. The staff are knowledgeable and engaging, and you can have a decent coffee while they divvy up your order.

Monoprix: When this French supermarket opened they promised a cheese selection to die for. We were not disappointed. Rather than a room, this is a cordoned-off area, a temple to cheese. It's well organised and while staff are not always as well informed as they could be, you can buy a decent French goat cheese here as well as some of the more unusual, stinky types. They will also let you sample them along with some of their gourmet chutneys.

Cheese Counter, La Cigale Hotel: This was the original cheese counter in Doha, housed in the open restaurant and food area of this Lebanese hotel. It was the place that first introduced me to sheep milk cheese and I haven't looked back. This is the place to come for more unusual cheeses with a French influence.

Lulu Hypermarket and Carrefour: Scoff if you must, but these two venerable supermarkets have some of the best cheese selections you are likely to find. Carrefour obviously veers towards French cheeses including Camembert and Brie. Although they have been known to commit crimes against cheese by serving them pre-sliced. Lulu on the other hand, especially the Garaffah store, has a rotating selection of cheeses from the UK and Australia (a recent visit netted a fabulously aged cheddar from England).

If you fancy a cheese hit but don't want to do the footwork, several hotels in the city have a unique and broad selection on offer. **Grand Hyatt Doha** has a cheese loving General Manager who ensure they serve a great selection of cheeses at their Friday Brunch in The Grill. They also hold a regular Swiss Festival with raclette. Every month at **Opal by Gordon Ramsay at St Regis Doha**, they host a Grapes and Cheese night where they pair beverages with French cheeses. Don't say I didn't warn you!

- Rachel Morris is a Qatar-based writer and food blogger (lifeonthewedge.net).

The latest food news and happenings in the city.

Early birds get the brekkie!

Head to Quick Bites at Renaissance Doha City Center Hotel to try the Early Riser Breakfast on a weekend morning. The spread features traditional eggs, baked breads, cheeses, cold cuts, and a cup of coffee or tea – perfect start to the day!

QR40 per person, every Friday and Saturday morning. Call +974 4419 6100.

Seasonal eating

White asparagus is back in season, and you can get a taste of the spring vegetable in dishes such as White Asparagus Gratin with gorgonzola sabayon, and Walnut Rigatoni with asparagus, on the à la carte menu at Rocca, Grand Hyatt Doha.

From 15-30 May, call +974 7021 8096.



Power lunch

Looking for a light lunch to enjoy with colleagues? Choices at Oryx Rotana-Doha now allows you to customise your own salads at the Roots Salad Bar, and offers a selection of sushi rolls, breads and cheeses to enjoy on the side as well.

QR80 per person, daily for lunch. Call +974 4402 3333.



After-hours indulgence

There's nothing more satisfying than a sweet treat post supper. Make your way to W Café, W Doha Hotel and Residences when the cravings kick in, and avail the buy-one-get-one free offer on cakes, croissants and muffins.

Available daily after 9pm. Call +974 4453 5385.

Additional text NICOLA MONTEATH | Photos SUPPLIED

Tried & tasted

Each month, we review two of the UAE's top tables.

Contemporary British





Where: Rhodes 44, St Regis Abu Dhabi

What's it like: The first thing I noticed when I walked into the restaurant was the chairs. They looked very familiar – the Baroque-style white chairs with bright pink and orange backs are very similar to celebrity chef Gary Rhodes' soon-to-be-reopened Dubai restaurant Rhodes Mezzanine. But that's where the similarity ends. These chairs combine with even more luxurious armchair-style seats in purple, champagne and bright stripes, and glamorous chandeliers, to create an environment that is opulent yet understated.

The term modern British, when it comes to food, has come to be an all-encompassing umbrella, with so many different influences, and in this case, Gary has decided to tribute the region that is now his second home, with Middle Eastern inflections onto a British-rooted flavour profile. So, for every steak and kidney dumpling, there's a seared sumac and pistachio king prawn with tahini dish on the menu.

For starters, I opted for a sumac prawn dish on a bed of sautéed greens, while the steak and kidney dumpling, a modern take on the classic pie, served with mash and onion gravy, was my dining partner's choice. Both dishes were executed perfectly, and set the tone for the rest of the meal. For mains, the pan fried salmon with flageolet beans was yet another display of exemplary restraint from the chefs to result in a beautiful dish of simple, delicate flavours, while the USDA prime ribeye – steaks are a specialty here, with a separate grill section on the menu – was a fine cut, grilled to perfection, and perfectly paired with a bernaise sauce. For dessert, it was an argument between the classic sticky toffee pudding, and my iced lemon mousse with raspberry sauce – a lovely balance of sweet and tart that had all the joys of ice cream, with the delicate texture of mousse – over which one was better; I think the lemon mousse is the perfect summer dessert. This restaurant lives up to every single expectation one has from a chef of Gary's calibre – with a surprisingly affordable price tag.

Best for: Gourmet lunch with friends

If you want to go: Around Dhs500 for three-course meal for two. Call 02-6944553.

- Sudeshna Ghosh



Where: Where: Table9 by Darren Velvick, Hilton Dubai Creek

What's it like: The restaurant, previously headed by Nick and Scott, has always been highly lauded. So when Gordon Ramsay's protégé Darren Velvick stepped in as chef patron, he knew he had big shoes to fill. Luckily, we can vouch for that the fact that he has more than filled them – in less than six months since he took over. Table 9's décor isn't flamboyant – they impress on the food front – with a monochromatic black and white colour scheme, beige linens and red roses on the table offering the only hints of colour in sight.

The menu continues the Table 9 tradition with a focus on the ingredient, which means you don't always know what a dish is going to end up looking or tasting like – leaving it to the friendly, hospitable staff to tell us more – and this made for some very pleasant surprises during the course of our meal. My dining partner and I shared three appetisers of foie gras rolled in gingerbread crumbs complemented by apricot sauce; snails doused in garlic butter and served with crunchy bone marrow balls that were meaty and juicy inside; and a crispy curried fried egg on a bed of apple and raisins, which wasn't only beautifully presented, but tasted divine. My dining partner's main course choice was succulent lamb with potatoes covered in a refreshing mint and onion chutney-style dressing, and a side of pomme cocottes (fries) with a buttery anchovy mayo. The moist, saucy braised shorts ribs of beef that I ordered, were topped with steamed cauliflower, and garnished with faintly tangy crispy capers that livened up each bite.

For dessert, we chose the quirky crunchy cereals coated in milk and white chocolate and a scoop of light, milky ice cream, and a good old classic carrot cake with cream cheese. Overall, we were incredibly impressed with the presentation and taste of each dish, and would definitely come back here for more.

If you want to go: Approximately Dhs550 for three-course meal for two, without drinks. Call 04-2127551.

- Nicola Monteath

Best for: Classy dinner date





Photographs SUPPLIED and by REVIEWERS

Flavours of the month

Our pick of the best restaurant offers, promotions and deals this month.



Waterfront magic

The iconic 20-year old Boardwalk restaurant at Dubai Creek Marina has re-opened its doors after a major makeover, and now features aquatic-inspired interiors and a Mediterranean market-style seafood display – although loyal fans will probably want to stick to the lovely outdoor deck! Headed by chef de cuisine, Stefano Andreoni, the restaurant offers a new menu too, featuring bouillabaisse and a seafood platter, among other well-loved classics such as fish and chips.
Call 04-2956000.



Asian affair



If you're craving a spice kick, try the recently launched Asian brunch on Saturdays at Blue Elephant, Al Bustan Rotana. The widespread buffet offers crab wontons with plum sauce, lamb, beef and chicken satay cooked on the spot, tempura, sushi and soup for starters, and a selection of Thai, Filipino, Malay, Chinese and Indian curries and stir-fries for mains. Stop by the noodle bar to choose crispy or egg noodles with your favourite sauces and toppings. Desserts feature sweet sago, a divine mango mousse and coconut and water chestnuts, among others. Don't forget to end with a cup of tea – served in a cute elephant teapot!
From Dhs220 per person. Call 04-2820000.

The Italian way

For a mid-week gourmet fix, head to the Antipasti Night on Tuesdays at Arcadia lounge, The H Dubai, to try cold cuts with grilled vegetables, authentic Italian cheeses, and pasta from live cooking stations, all paired with Italian wines.
Every Tuesday evening, Dhs149 per person. Call 04-5018888.

Seasonal specials

White asparagus is making its way across menus in the UAE and Mazina at The Address Dubai Marina is offering the seasonal vegetable in a special menu which includes dishes such as veal shnitzel, and seared rainbow trout.
The à la carte menu is available until May 15, call 04-4367777.

Lunch deal!

Bentley Bistro and Bar's newly launched Business lunch menu is the perfect reason to step out of the office with colleagues. The à la carte menu features dishes like pan-seared peppered tuna steak with roasted eggplant and eggplant caviar, rib-eye steak, warm prawn salad or French Nicoise salad. The menu options are available over the weekend too.
All dishes below Dhs100, call 02-6262131.



Seafood surprise

Mumbai's well-loved seafood restaurant Mahesh Lunch Home has opened its doors in Karama, Dubai, to the great excitement of its fans, and it's not hard to see why. Don't let the name misguide you, it's a proper restaurant (that is also open for dinner) with contemporary, marine-inspired décor and a staggering array of fresh, delicious seafood cooked in different styles invoked by recipes from across coastal India. From crab Mallipuram to lobster vindaloo and prawns Malabar curry, there's something for everyone – even if you're not a fish lover. Their Tandoori dishes and meat specialties are excellent too, although it's probably the seafood that will keep you coming back for more!
Call 04-3968087.

Compiled by NICOLA MONTEATH | Photographs SUPPLIED

✳ Getting jazzy

Jones the Grocer Al Manara, Dubai, and Khalidiya Abu Dhabi, have gotten a jazz twist. Dine here to enjoy live music from the saxophonist, Manuel Kev, while tucking into a three-course set menu of wagyu beef pie or wild mushroom risotto.
On Mondays in Dubai and Wednesdays in Abu Dhabi, Dhs110 per person. Call 04-3466886 and 02-4438762.



✳ Summer menu

Now that the temperatures are rising, we will be tucking into the new British summer-inspired menu at Rhodes Twenty 10, Le Royal Meridien Beach Resort and Spa. Additions to the menu include heirloom tomato salad, warm smoked salmon and green pea gazpacho cream, sticky lavender honey roast chicken breast, and a decadent raspberry cream tartlet.
À la carte menu, call 04-4447448.

✳ Weekend dining redefined

We don't call it a brunch, the all-new Friday dining experience from Shangri-La Hotel, Dubai, allows you to try dishes from buffets at three different restaurants – Hoi An, Shang Palace and Dunes Café. Try everything from Peking duck, to char-grilled seafood and succulent steaks, as you go on an epicurean journey through Vietnam, China, North America and Europe.
Fridays, Dhs299 per person. Call 04-4052703.



✳ Arabian delights

Dine at Sambusek, the traditional Lebanese restaurant at Rosewood Abu Dhabi, to try the Fan Luban (Art of Lebanon) set menu which features hot and cold mezze, mixed grill of shish kebab, shish taouk and kofta kebab, as well as mixed baklawa and hallawa bill jeben for desserts.
Available on Saturday afternoons, from Dhs199 per person. Call 02-8135555.



✳ Trending now!

Gather a bunch of friends to kick back on the sunbeds, or as the evening progresses, head into the glamorous lounge, and listen to live tunes by the resident DJ at the open beach club, bar and restaurant, Zero Gravity, located near Skydive Dubai. The new all-day venue spans across two floors, boasts a terrace, and offers dishes like crispy chicken sliders with Thai mango, pecorino cheese fries and truffle mayonnaise, as well as mezze, pizza, wraps and seafood grills, on the menu.
A single one-day pass starts from Dhs150 for weekdays (Dhs50 redeemable for food and beverages) and Dhs250 for weekends (Dhs100 redeemable). Call 04-3990009.



✳ Health boost

Get your children to eat citrus fruits by taking them to the All about citrus dinner promotion at the Talk Restaurant, Mövenpick Hotel Jumeirah Beach. Try vitamin-rich fruits in a selection of meat, vegetarian and seafood dishes from the buffet.
Available on Mondays, Dhs165 per person. Call 04-4498888.

✳ Italian classic



The Sheraton Dubai Creek Hotel & Towers, a Grand Dame of Dubai hotels, has reopened its doors after a multi-million dollar makeover, and one of the first restaurants to open is the revamped new Vivaldi. The unbeatable creek views of the covered terrace remain, with the interiors having been given a contemporary redesign. And, with Michelin-star Italian chef Alfredo Russo's name on the door, the restaurant serves up an all-new menu of creative takes on classic Italian flavours. Whether it's a flavourful mushroom soup hidden under a polenta lid, or a slow-braised veal with a yoghurt-like potato mash foam, each dish offers a humorous twist, with delicious results.
Call 04-2071717.

✳ Culinary journey

Embark on a three-hour flavourful journey as you try four cuisines across four restaurants at Movenpick Hotel Ibn Batuta Gate. The evening commences with cocktails and canapés at Moroc, a Morrocan themed bar, and then moves to the signature Italian eatery Sicilia, for antipasti and appetisers, followed by dim sum and Peking duck at Shanghai Chic and thali (Indian platter) of five curries and lamb and chicken from the tandoor at Chor Bazaar, to end back at Moroc for a dessert selection.
Available daily for Dhs499 per person. Call 04-4445613.



Thai Street Food

1 May – 30 June 2014

Explore a medley of Thai street food served a la carte amidst the royal setting of Benjarong. Enhanced with an abundance of Thai herbs, flavors burst to life as soon as you bite into these dishes popularly served in Thailand's streetscape.

For table reservations, call +971 4 317 4515 or e-mail dine.dtdu@dusit.com

www.Dusit.com

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DUBAI

Home Cooking

Inspiring recipes for easy everyday meals and stylish weekend entertaining

IN THIS SECTION


✳ Healthy recipes for the whole week, **P24**


✳ Contemporary Middle Eastern cooking, **P36**


✳ Easy entertaining, James Martin-style! **P40**

Jammy heart drops, recipe p46

Make it tonight

Quick and simple weeknight suppers that are good for you too. Recipes KATY GREENWOOD Photographs SAM STOWELL

Smoked haddock & creamed corn curry

SERVES 4 ● PREP 10 MINS ● COOK 30 MINS Easy Low cal 1 of 5-a-day

325g can sweetcorn
1 tbsp vegetable oil
1 onion, roughly chopped
1 tbsp mild curry powder
1 garlic clove, crushed
50g creamed coconut, chopped
4 frozen smoked haddock fillets
Cooked rice, to serve

1 In a blender, whizz the sweetcorn, along with any liquid from the can, into a rough purée and set aside.
2 Heat the oil in a large lidded frying pan and cook the onion for 2-3 mins to soften. Add the curry powder and garlic and cook for 1 min more until fragrant.
3 Tip the creamed coconut into the pan with 300ml water, stirring until the creamed coconut dissolves. Add the puréed sweetcorn and bring to the boil. Place the haddock fillets in the sauce, then reduce the heat to a simmer. Cover and cook for 20 mins, or until the fish is cooked through. Season and serve with rice.

PER SERVING 332 kcals, protein 32g, carbs 23g, fat 13g, sat fat 1g, fibre 3g, sugar 8g, salt 3.4g

TIP

The flavours in this dish can also be recreated with canned coconut cream.



Food styling KATY GREENWOOD | Styling REBECCA NEWPORT



Tastes as good as you remember!

Corned beef hash

SERVES 4 ● PREP 10 MINS ● COOK 25 MINS Easy

500g potatoes, peeled and chopped
2 tbsp vegetable oil
1 onion, roughly chopped
340g can corned beef, cut into cubes
2 tbsp Worcestershire sauce
Baked beans, and a little curly parsley, roughly chopped, to serve (optional)

1 Put the potatoes in a pan, cover with cold water and bring to the boil. Cook for about 6-7 mins, then drain.
2 Heat the oil in a non-stick frying pan and cook the onion for 3-4 mins over a medium heat. Add the potatoes and corned beef, and push down with a spatula to crisp up, cooking for about 5 mins. Turn the mixture over, trying not to beak up the meat and potatoes too much, then add the Worcestershire sauce. Cook for another 5 mins, pushing down to crisp the base again. Season a little, then serve with baked beans and a sprinkling of parsley, if you like.

PER SERVING 333 kcals, protein 25g, carbs 25g, fat 15g, sat fat 6g, fibre 3g, sugar 5g, salt 2.1g



Punchy flavours

Chorizo & rosemary pearl barley risotto

SERVES 4 ● PREP 15 MINS ● COOK 40 MINS Easy P Low cal 1 of 5-a-day

225g chorizo ring, sliced (can be swapped with beef sausages)
1 onion, finely chopped
1 garlic clove, finely chopped
300g pearl barley
400g can chopped tomatoes with sliced olives
1 litre hot chicken stock, made with 1 stock cube
2 stalks rosemary, leaves chopped

1 Heat a non-stick frying pan over a medium heat and fry the chorizo for 3-4 mins until it turns golden and releases its oil. Remove with a slotted spoon and set aside.
2 Add the onion and garlic to the pan, and cook for 3-4 mins, until they begin to soften. Add the pearl barley and stir well to coat in the oil, before tipping in the chopped tomatoes and the chicken stock. Bring just to the boil, then turn down to a simmer and cook for 30 mins, stirring occasionally, until all the liquid has been absorbed and the pearl barley is tender. You may need to top up with a little extra water as you go.
3 Season and stir in the rosemary and chorizo to serve.

PER SERVING 497 kcals, protein 25g, carbs 68g, fat 15g, sat fat 6g, fibre 3g, sugar 6g, salt 1.6g >>



Your new midweek favourite



Spicy oven-baked chicken & chips

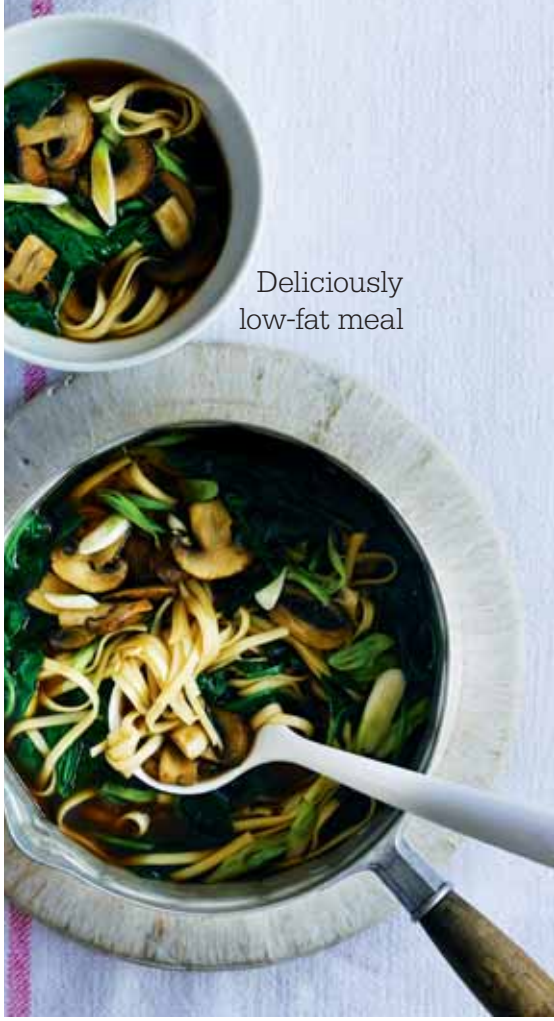
SERVES 4 ● PREP 10 MINS ● COOK 40-45 MINS Easy

1 tbsp Cajun seasoning
2 tbsp vegetable oil
Zest and juice of 1 lime
750g large potatoes, cut into chips
1kg chicken wings
Green salad or coleslaw and ketchup, to serve

1 Heat oven to 200C/180C fan. In a bowl, whisk together the Cajun seasoning, vegetable oil, lime zest and juice. Toss the chips, wings and Cajun mixture together in batches, so that everything is well coated.
2 Cover a large baking sheet with foil, then arrange the chips around the outside and the wings in the middle. Season and bake for 20 mins, then turn the chips and return to the oven for a further 20-25 mins until the chips and wings are golden. Serve with green salad, or coleslaw and ketchup.

PER SERVING 518 kcals, protein 34g, carbs 32g, fat 28g, sat fat 7g, fibre 3g, sugar 2g, salt 0.5g

TIP If you need to use 2 baking sheets, make sure you have an even amount of chicken and chips on each tray, so that all the chips soak up the tasty chicken juices.



Deliciously low-fat meal

Udon noodle soup

SERVES 4 ● PREP 5 MINS ● COOK 10 MINS Easy V Low cal Low fat 1 of 5-a-day

1 vegetable stock cube
50ml teriyaki sauce
1 tbsp vegetable oil
140g chestnut mushrooms, sliced
½ bunch spring onions, thinly sliced
140g udon noodles
200g spinach

1 In a large pan, dissolve the stock cube in 1 litre of water and stir in the teriyaki sauce. While the soup base comes to the boil, heat the oil in a frying pan and cook the mushrooms over a high heat, for 2-3 mins, until they turn golden. Add the spring onions and cook for 1 min more, then set aside.
2 Once the soup base has come to the boil, add the noodles and cook for 4 mins. Add the spinach and cook for 1 min more until just wilted. Stir in the mushrooms, spring onions and some seasoning, and serve.

PER SERVING 124 kcals, protein 5g, carbs 17g, fat 4g, sat fat none, fibre 3g, sugar 8g, salt 1.9g GF

For truly authentic Chinese Cuisine

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Eat well all week

This month, we've added more recipes to include weekend dishes too, so you can eat healthy seven days a week.

Recipes JEMMA MORPHET Photographs WILL HEAP

Egg & veggie pitas

SERVES 2 ● PREP 15 MINS ● COOK 20 MINS Easy V 3 of 5-a-day Good for you

1 aubergine, cut into thick rounds
1½ tbsp olive oil
1 tbsp harissa
2 eggs
1 tbsp red wine vinegar
2 tsp agave nectar or golden caster sugar
1 raw beetroot, grated
1 large carrot, peeled and julienned
½ small red onion, very finely sliced
4 tbsp 0% fat Greek yoghurt
1 tbsp chopped dill
1 garlic clove, crushed
2 wholemeal pita breads

1 Heat oven to 220C/200C fan. Put the aubergine slices on a baking sheet, season, brush with oil and bake for 15 mins. Turn, spread with the harissa, and bake for another 5 mins.

2 Meanwhile, carefully lower the eggs into a pan of boiling water, turn down the heat and simmer for 10 mins. Run under cold water to cool, peel and put to one side.

3 In a bowl, mix the vinegar and agave or sugar with some seasoning, then tip in the beetroot, carrot and onion. In another bowl, mix together the yoghurt, dill, garlic and seasoning. Toast the pitas and split them in half. Slice the eggs and put them inside the pitas with the spicy aubergine rounds and some of the beetroot salad. Spoon in the yoghurt and serve with any of the remaining aubergine, salad and yoghurt on the side.

PER SERVING 387 kcals, protein 20g, carbs 41g, fat 16g, sat fat 3g, fibre 9g, sugar 15g, salt 0.8g

SUNDAY
Feel full on fewer cals



Food styling LIZZIE HARRIS| Styling VICTORIA ALLEN



MONDAY
Low-fat, fast & tasty

Beef & orange stir-fry

SERVES 3 ● PREP 15 MINS ● COOK 10 MINS Easy

Low fat | Folate | Vit C | Iron | 2 of 5-a-day

200g purple sprouting or Tenderstem broccoli
4 tsp groundnut oil
400g rump steak, trimmed of any excess fat and cut into thin strips
2 tsp cornflour
2 red peppers, deseeded and sliced
Thumb-sized piece of ginger, peeled and cut into matchsticks
4 garlic cloves, finely chopped
1 red chilli, thinly sliced (deseeded if you don't like it too hot)
4 spring onions, halved and sliced lengthways
2 oranges, 1 juiced and 1 cut into segments
1½ tbsp clear honey
1 tbsp rice vinegar
1 tbsp dark soy sauce
Steamed rice or noodles, to serve

1 Steam or boil the broccoli for 3-4 mins until tender. Drain and run under cold water.
2 Heat 2 tsp of the oil in a non-stick wok or large frying pan and toss the beef strips in cornflour. When the oil is hot, fry the beef for 1-2 mins to brown, then put to one side.
3 Heat the remaining oil in the pan, then toss in the peppers and fry for 2 mins. Add the ginger, garlic, chilli and 3 spring onions, and cook for 1 min more, taking care not to burn the garlic. Add the orange juice, honey, rice vinegar and soy, and bubble down briefly before stirring in the broccoli, beef and orange segments. Heat through, then sprinkle with the remaining chopped spring onion. Serve with rice or noodles.

PER SERVING 337 kcals, protein 34g, carbs 25g, fat 11g, sat fat 3g, fibre 6g, sugar 20g, salt 1.2g



TUESDAY
Easy way to 5-a-day

Spinach, ricotta & chicken traybake

SERVES 4 ● PREP 20 MINS ● COOK 30 MINS Easy | Low cal | Low fat | Calcium | Folate | Fibre | Vit C | 4 of 5-a-day | Good for you

300g baby spinach
4 tbsp ricotta
Zest and juice of 1 lemon
A few grinds of nutmeg
4 skinless chicken breasts
2 tbsp olive oil
50g fresh breadcrumbs, seasoned
3 courgettes, cut into batons
2 peppers, sliced
2 red onions, cut into wedges, roots intact
250g vine cherry tomatoes
4 garlic cloves

1 Heat oven to 200C/180C fan. Put the spinach in a large colander and pour over 1-2 kettles of boiling water to wilt. Allow to drain for a few mins, then squeeze out as much excess water as possible. Chop, put in a bowl and beat in the ricotta, lemon zest, nutmeg and plenty of seasoning.
2 Using a sharp knife, cut a slit into the side of each chicken breast and use your fingers to make a little pocket. Spoon the mixture into the 4 breasts. Rub with 2 tsp of the oil and press the breadcrumbs on top, then arrange the chicken in a roasting tin.
3 Put the vegetables on another tray and drizzle with the remaining oil, and season well. Bake the chicken and veg for around 30 mins, stirring the veg once. Remove when the chicken is cooked through and the breadcrumbs are golden.
4 Remove the softened garlic from the vegetables and mash it with the lemon juice, then stir this with the roasted veg and serve with the chicken.

PER SERVING 348 kcals, protein 39g, carbs 24g, fat 11g, sat fat 3g, fibre 6g, sugar 9g, salt 0.8g >>

WEDNESDAY

A healthier roast dinner

Pork loin roast with fig & apple stuffing

SERVES 4 ● PREP 15 MINS ● COOK 55 MINS Easy ❄ STUFFING BALLS AFTER BAKING P 2 of 5-a-day

You can also use beef tenderloin for this dish although pork and apple are a classic combination.

2 tbsp olive oil
600g pork tenderloin fillet, trimmed of fat and sinew
FOR THE STUFFING
2 onions, finely chopped
2 dessert apples, cut into cubes
3 dried figs, finely chopped
85g each fresh white and wholemeal breadcrumbs
a few sage leaves, finely chopped
1 egg
Pinch of lemon zest
500g pot chicken stock
FOR THE SAUCE
1 tbsp balsamic vinegar
1 tbsp quince paste
350g each steamed green beans and carrots, to serve

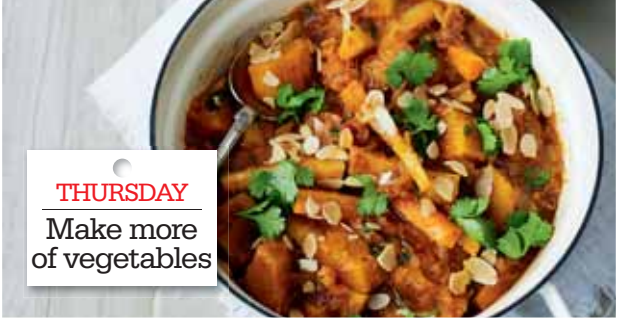
1 Heat oven to 190C/170C fan. In a non-stick frying pan, heat 2 tsp of the oil and brown the pork fillet for 4-5 mins, turning once to cook evenly. Rub with another 1 tsp of oil and season. Transfer to a roasting tin and bake for 40 mins or until the juices run clear when you skewer the thickest part of the loin. (Timings will vary depending on thickness of the meat.)

2 Using the same frying pan, heat 1 tbsp oil, add the onions and cook for about 10 mins until soft. Add the apples and figs and cook for another 5 mins. Tip into a bowl and add the breadcrumbs, sage, egg, lemon zest and 2 tbsp of the chicken stock. Add seasoning, then roll into 12 balls. Put the stuffing balls on a baking tray lined with baking parchment, then bake for 20-25 mins.

3 When the pork is cooked, remove from the roasting tin and allow to rest for 10 mins. Deglaze the roasting tin with the remaining chicken stock, scraping any of the brown bits off the bottom, then add the vinegar, quince paste and resting juices. If your roasting tin isn't flameproof, transfer to a saucepan and bubble down until the sauce has thickened to the consistency of double cream. Season, slice the pork and serve with stuffing, sauce and vegetables.

PER SERVING 506 kcals, protein 41g, carbs 52g, fat 14g, sat fat 3g, fibre 5g, sugar 20g, salt 1.1g





THURSDAY

Make more of vegetables

Vegetable curry with fruity raita

SERVES 4 ● PREP 20 MINS ● COOK 1 HR Easy ❄ CURRY ONLY

V Low cal Heart healthy Calcium Folate Fibre Vit C Iron 4 of 5-a-day

2 tbsp vegetable oil
2 onions, thinly sliced
½ pumpkin, squash or butternut squash, cut into cubes
4 carrots, cut into batons
2 parsnips, cut into batons
3 tbsp curry paste
8 large ripe tomatoes, 2 cut into wedges
6 garlic cloves, peeled
Thumb-sized piece of ginger, peeled and chopped
Small pack of coriander, chopped
200g brown basmati rice
6 tbsp low-fat natural yoghurt
100g mango, cut into cubes
1 tbsp mango chutney
Small pack of toasted flaked almonds

1 Heat the oil in a large lidded pan. Tip in the onions and cook for 10 mins until soft. Stir in the pumpkin, carrots and parsnips, and cook for 5 mins until they begin to soften. Add the curry paste and cook for another 3 mins.

2 In a bowl, whizz together the whole tomatoes, garlic and ginger until smooth, then pour over the vegetables, adding 200ml water. Save a handful of coriander to serve, and stir in the rest. Pop on the lid and simmer for 40 mins or until the vegetables are tender. Uncover, stir through the tomato wedges and reduce to the thicken the sauce.

3 Meanwhile, cook the rice following pack instructions. Mix the yoghurt, mango and chutney in a small bowl. Fork the rice into a serving dish and scatter the curry with remaining coriander and the almonds. Season, then serve alongside the rice and fruity yoghurt.

PER SERVING 467 kcals, protein 13g, carbs 73g, fat 13g, sat fat 2g, fibre 12g, sugar 31g, salt 0.8g



FRIDAY
Lighter food for weekends

Baked eggs brunch

SERVES 4 ● PREP 10 MINS ● COOK 30 MINS Easy V Low cal Folate 2 of 5-a-day Good for you

2 tbsp olive oil
2 leeks, thinly sliced
2 onions, thinly sliced
200g baby spinach leaves
Handful of fresh wholemeal breadcrumbs
25g Parmesan (or vegetarian alternative), finely grated
4 sundried tomatoes, chopped
4 medium eggs

1 Heat oven to 200C/180C fan. Heat the oil in a pan and add the leeks, onions and seasoning. Cook for 15-20 mins until soft and beginning to caramelise.
2 Meanwhile, put the spinach in a colander and pour over a kettle of boiling water. When cool enough to handle, squeeze out as much liquid as possible. Mix the breadcrumbs and cheese together.
3 Arrange the leek and onion mixture between 4 ovenproof dishes, then scatter with the spinach and pieces of sundried tomato. Make a well in the middle of each dish and crack an egg in it. Season and sprinkle with cheese crumbs. Put the dishes on a baking tray and cook for 12-15 mins, until the whites are set and yolks are cooked to your liking.

PER SERVING 210 kcals, protein 12g, carbs 10g, fat 13g, sat fat 3g, fibre 5g, sugar 7g, salt 0.5g



SATURDAY
Eat more fish

Fish parcels with romesco sauce & veg

LEFTOVER ROMESCO SAUCE ONLY
SERVES 2 ● PREP 15 MINS ● COOK 15 MINS Easy Low cal Folate Fibre Vit C 2 of 5-a-day Good for you

2 firm white fish fillets (like cod)
4 lemon slices
2 thyme sprigs
2 tbsp olive oil
½ cauliflower, cut into wedges
10 spring onions, ends trimmed, roots left intact
1 slice sourdough bread, torn into chunks
1 red chilli, sliced (deseeded if you don't like it too hot)
2 garlic cloves, sliced
10 blanched almonds
2 ready-roasted red peppers, from a jar
1 tomato, peeled (see tip)
½ tsp Sherry vinegar

1 Heat oven to 200C/180C fan. Put each fish fillet on a large piece of baking parchment and top each with a few slices of lemon and a sprig of thyme. Drizzle with 1 tsp of the oil and season. Fold over the top edges of each piece of parchment to make a seal, then scrunch up the ends like a sweet wrapper. Put the parcels on a baking sheet and bake in oven for 15 mins.
2 Meanwhile, steam the cauliflower for 4 mins, then add the spring onions for 3 mins more or until tender. Pat dry, then toss the veg in 2 tsp olive oil and season. In a large frying pan, toast the bread pieces in the remaining oil, then add the chilli and garlic, and cook for 1 min. Tip into a food processor with the nuts, peppers, tomato and vinegar, and pulse until you have a rough paste. Season and put to one side.
3 Wipe then heat the frying pan. Add the cauliflower wedges and spring onions, and cook for a few mins each side to brown. Serve alongside the fish and sauce.

PER SERVING 435 kcals, protein 38g, carbs 27g, fat 19g, sat fat 3g, fibre 6g, sugar 8g, salt 0.7g GF

PEELING TOMATOES

Boil the kettle and score a cross on the bottom of your tomato. Put in a bowl, cover with boiling water and leave for 20 seconds or so. The skin should start to peel back – remove from the water and peel away all the skin.



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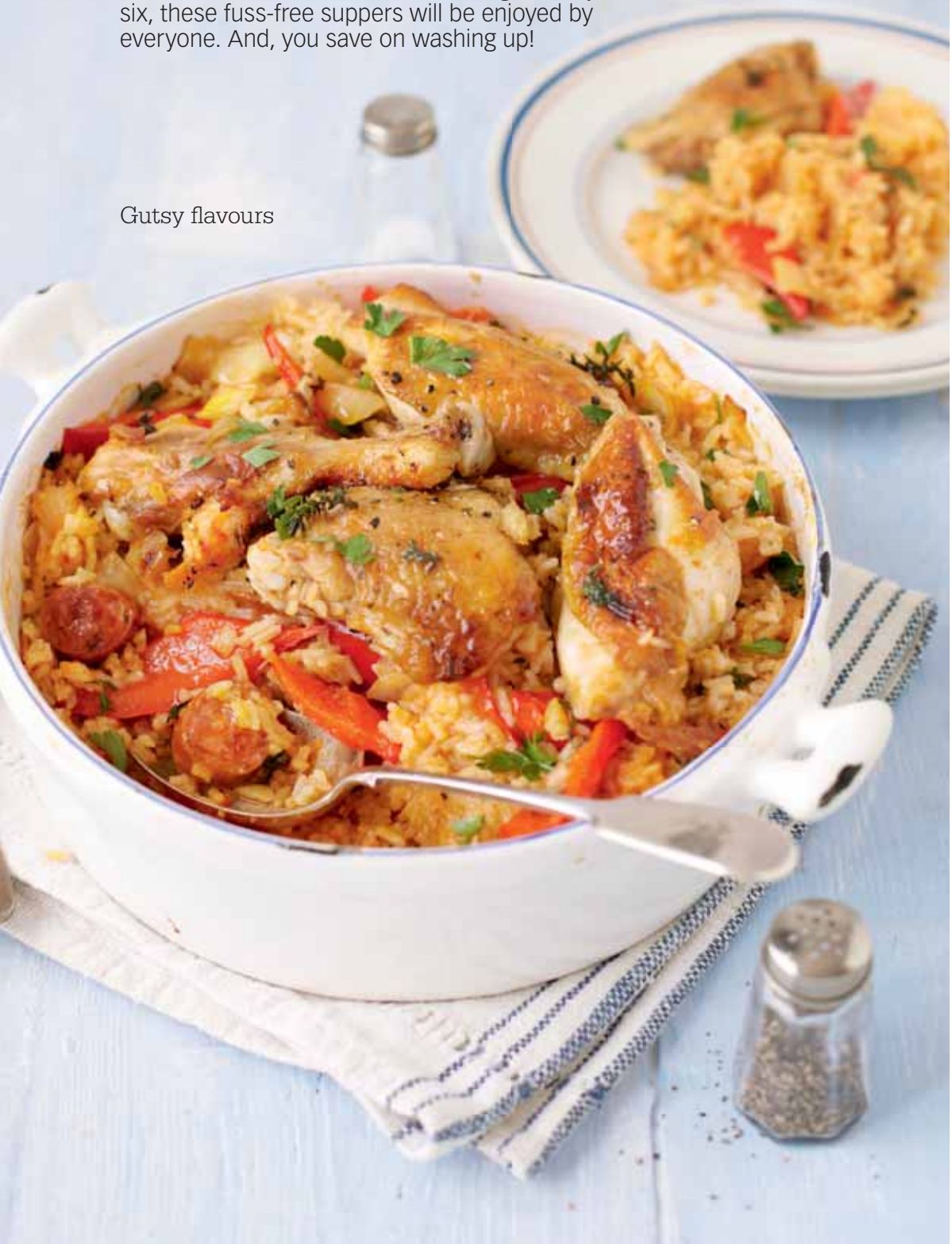
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One-pot wonders

Whether it's dinner for two, or feeding a family of six, these fuss-free suppers will be enjoyed by everyone. And, you save on washing up!

Gutsy flavours



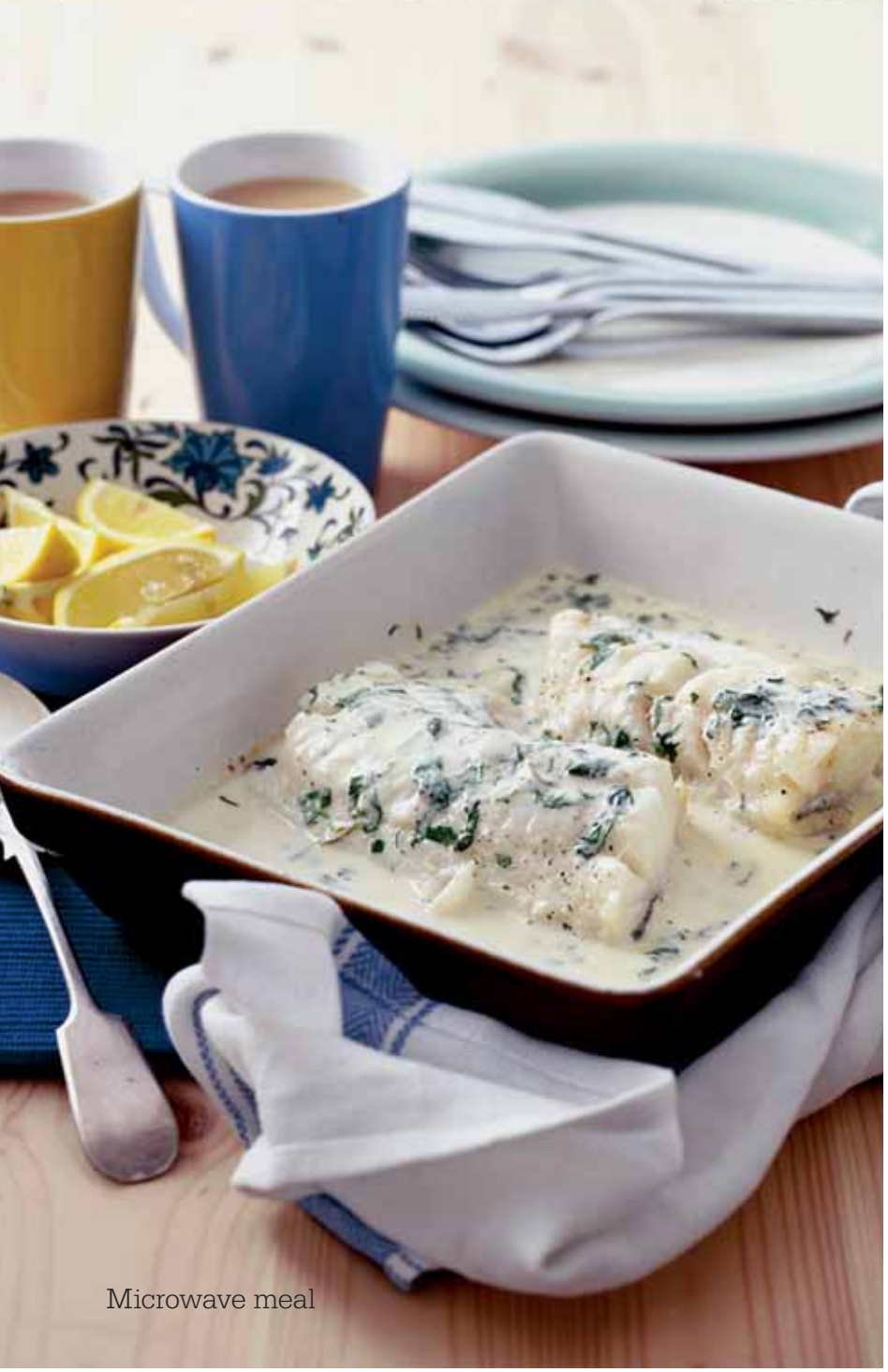
Chicken & chorizo rice one-pot

SERVES 4 ● PREP 20 MINS ● COOK 1 HR 20 MINS Easy ❄ P Vit C 1 of 5-a-day

1 tbsp oil
8 chicken pieces or 1 whole chicken, jointed
1 large onion, chopped
1 red pepper, deseeded and chopped into large chunks
3 garlic cloves, crushed
225g chorizo or beef sausages, skinned and sliced
1 tbsp tomato purée
1 tbsp thyme leaves, chopped
850ml chicken stock
400g long-grain rice
2 tbsp chopped parsley

1 Heat the oil in a large flameproof casserole dish and brown the chicken pieces on all sides – you may have to do this in batches. Remove from the dish and put to one side.
2 Lower the heat, add the onion and pepper, and gently cook for 10 mins until softened. Add the garlic and chorizo, and cook for a further 2 mins until the chorizo has released some of its oils into the dish. Stir in the tomato purée and cook for 1 min more.
3 Return the chicken pieces to the dish along with the thyme, white wine and stock. Bring the liquid to a boil, then cover the dish with a tight-fitting lid, lower the heat and cook for 30 mins.
4 Tip in the rice and stir everything together. Cover, set over a low heat and cook for a further 15 mins, or until the rice is cooked and has absorbed most of the cooking liquid. Remove from the heat and leave the dish to sit for about 10 mins to absorb any remaining liquid. Season to taste and scatter with parsley to serve.

PER SERVING 834 kcals, protein 63g, carbs 90g, fat 21g, sat fat 7g, fibre 4g, sugar 9g, salt 1.7g >>



Microwave meal

Creamy cod in a flash

SERVES 2 ● PREP 10 MINS
● COOK 5 MINS Easy

2 skinless cod fillets, about 175g each
Good handful of watercress leaves
4 rounded tbsp crème fraîche
1 rounded tbsp horseradish sauce
Lemon wedges, to serve

1 Nestle the fillets side by side in a shallow microwaveable dish and season. Roughly chop the watercress and mix it in a bowl with the crème fraîche, horseradish and a little salt.
2 Spoon a pile of sauce over each piece of fish (no need to spread it out). Cover with cling film, pierce it several times and microwave on High for 4-5 mins until the fish is all white and starts to separate into flakes.
3 Take the dish out of the microwave and leave it to stand for 2-3 mins with the cling film on, then uncover and serve, with lemon wedges for squeezing over.

PER SERVING 315 kcals, protein 35g, carbs 4g, fat 18g, sat fat 8g, fibre 1g, sugar 1g, salt 0.65g



Beef & vegetable casserole

SERVES 5 ● PREP 15 MINS
● COOK 3 HRS-3 HRS 50 MINS Easy

2 celery sticks, thickly sliced
1 onion, chopped
2 big carrots, halved lengthways then sliced
5 bay leaves
3 thyme sprigs
1 tbsp vegetable oil
1 tbsp butter
2 tbsp plain flour
2 tbsp tomato purée
2 tbsp Worcestershire sauce
2 beef stock cubes, crumbled
850g stewing beef (featherblade or brisket works nicely), cut into large chunks

1 Heat oven to 160C/140C fan and boil water in the kettle. Put the celery, onion, carrots, bay and 1 thyme sprig in a casserole with the oil and butter. Soften for 10 mins, then stir in the flour, followed by the tomato purée, Worcestershire sauce and beef stock cubes.
2 Gradually stir in 600ml hot water, then tip in the beef and bring to a gentle simmer. Cover and put in the oven for 2 hrs 30 mins, then uncover and cook for 30 mins-1 hr more, until the meat is tender and the sauce is thickened.

PER SERVING 483 kcals, protein 34g, carbs 14g, fat 33g, sat fat 13g, fibre 2g, sugar 7g, salt 1.6g

Cajun chicken gumbo

SERVES 6 ● PREP 20 MINS ● COOK 45 MINS Easy ❄ P Low fat

4 tbsp olive oil
5 skinless chicken breasts, cut into chunky pieces
1 onion, chopped
2 celery sticks, sliced
3 bay leaves
5 tbsp plain flour
4 tsp Cajun spice mix (or 1 tsp each paprika, ground cumin, ground chilli and dried basil)
600ml chicken stock (made with 2 stock cubes)
2 green peppers, deseeded and cut into chunks
300g thickly sliced ham (you can use beef ham), trimmed of fat and diced
3 spring onions, sliced
2 tbsp very roughly chopped parsley

1 Heat 1 tbsp of the oil in a wide casserole or large frying pan and fry the chicken for a few mins to brown. Tip out onto a plate. Add the onion to the pan, with 1 tbsp more oil, and fry for 5 mins until almost softened. Add the celery and fry for another 2 mins, then tip out to join the chicken. Add the remaining oil, the bay leaves and flour to the pan, and cook into a paste. Carry on cooking, stirring constantly (with a splash of water if you need it), until golden brown, then stir in the spice for 2 mins.

2 Gradually stir in the stock until smooth and saucy. Return the chicken and veg to the pan, along with the peppers, cover and simmer gently for 15 mins. Stir in the ham, cover and simmer gently for 10 mins more. Check for seasoning, then serve, sprinkled with the spring onions mixed with the chopped parsley.

PER SERVING 315 kcals, protein 37g, carbs 17g, fat 11g, sat fat 2g, fibre 3g, sugar 3g, salt 3g GF



Fresh idea for chicken

5 ways to top a spud

Exciting new toppings for jacket potatoes – a simple, filling supper that's also great as a barbecue side. Photograph WILL HEAP

Bake a perfect potato

Heat oven to 220C/200C fan. Rub a little oil and seasoning over the potatoes, then bake on a baking sheet for 25 mins. Turn down the oven to 190C/170C fan and bake for 1 hr-1 hr 15 mins more until the flesh is tender and the skin crisp and golden.

For a quicker option, prick a potato with a fork. Wrap in a sheet of kitchen paper and microwave on High for 8-10 mins until soft inside. For crisp skin, rub with a little oil, then flash under a hot grill, turning often.

To serve, slice a cross in the centre, squeeze the base to 'pop' the top, then choose your favourite filling.

Hummous & roasted red pepper

SERVES 2 ● PREP 2 MINS ● NO COOK

Easy V Low fat Fibre Superhealthy 1 of 5-a-day

Fill 2 jacket potatoes with **rocket leaves**, **roasted red pepper strips** from a jar and **2 tbsp of your favourite hummous**. Finish with a squeeze of **lemon juice** and **a pinch of paprika**.

PER SERVING 304 kcals, protein 9g, carbs 60g, fat 5g, sat fat 1g, fibre 7g, sugar 4g, salt 0.62g

Smoky bacon beans

SERVES 4 ● PREP 5 MINS ● COOK 15 MINS Easy P

Dice **4 smoked streaky bacon rashers** and **1 onion**, then fry until the onion is soft. Stir in **2 x 400g cans of baked beans** and **1 tsp each brown sugar**, **mild chilli powder** and **paprika**. Warm through and divide between 4 jacket potatoes. Top each with a dollop of **soured cream** and a **few snipped chives**.

PER SERVING 520 kcals, protein 22g, carbs 92g, fat 10g, sat fat 4g, fibre 13g, sugar 17g, salt 2.26g

Corn, chilli & avocado salsa

SERVES 2 ● PREP 10 MINS ● NO COOK

Easy V Fibre Superhealthy 2 of 5-a-day

Drain **198g can sweetcorn** and mix with **1 diced avocado**, **1 small chopped red chilli**, **juice of 1 lime**, **1 tbsp finely chopped red onion** and a small handful of **coriander leaves**. Season and pile into 2 jacket potatoes or 2 baked sweet potatoes.

PER SERVING 451 kcals, protein 10g, carbs 75g, fat 15g, sat fat 2g, fibre 8g, sugar 11g, salt 0.63g

Cheddar, pickle & onion

SERVES 1 ● PREP 5 MINS ● NO COOK

Easy V

Top 1 jacket potato with **50g grated cheddar**, **1 tbsp crunchy pickle** or **chutney** and **1 sliced spring onion**.

PER SERVING 476 kcals, protein 20g, carbs 63g, fat 18g, sat fat 11g, fibre 5g, sugar 8g, salt 1.59g

Salmon & soft cheese

SERVES 1 ● PREP 5 MINS ● NO COOK Easy

Mix **50g light soft cheese** with a **squeeze of lemon juice** and seasoning. Pile into a jacket potato and flake **1 hot-smoked salmon fillet** on top. Sprinkle with **1 heaped tsp capers** and a **little lemon zest**.

PER SERVING 580 kcals, protein 29g, carbs 60g, fat 27g, sat fat 9g, fibre 5g, sugar 4g, salt 3g GF



Salmon & soft cheese

Food styling VAL BARRETT | Styling JO HARRIS

Kitchen notes

Nutrition advice, cooking tips and product picks for your pantry.

Reader tip of the month

To keep guacamole from oxidising, add a very thin layer of water to the top – this keeps brown spots from forming the next day, and the water can easily be poured out when you want to eat it.

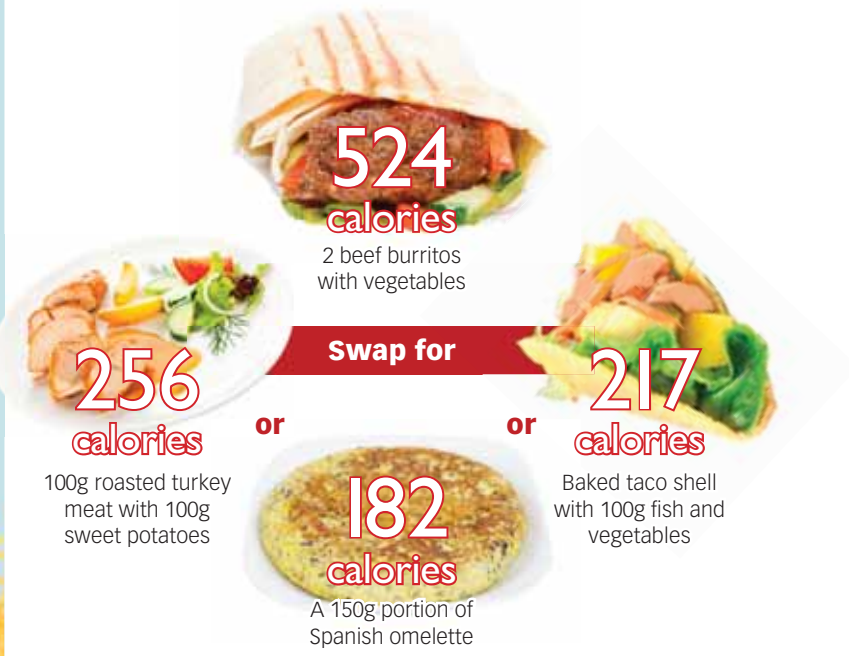
- Faiza Aliya Abbasi

Got a great tip you want to share?
Get in touch with us on facebook or twitter

Perfect your pasta

Who doesn't love pasta? It's definitely a quick, easy meal, but with just a few tips you could take your pasta supper to the next level. To begin with, make sure you cook your pasta in a large pot of salted, boiling water – this gives the pasta enough space in the pan. Also, you don't need to add olive oil, as it doesn't prevent the pasta from sticking to each other. Make sure to always cook until al dente, as it will cook more in the sauce. When straining pasta, save a cup of the water and add a splash of it to the sauce later – the starch in the water allows the sauce to cling to the pasta. Always pair light and skinny pastas – linguini and spaghetti – with seafood, cream-or oil based sauces. Fettuccine and tagliatelle are great with rich meaty sauces, while fusilli is great for light sauces like pesto. Penne works well with bolognese, ragu or in baked dishes.

SMART FOOD SWAPS



Fishy business!

Psst…we've come across a new seafood supplier that delivers right to your doorstep! Arabind Fresh offers fresh Norwegian salmon steak, sardines, mackerel, tuna, prawns, squid and much more, all guaranteed to be high quality (they are confident enough to offer free returns), and at competitive prices. What's more, they offer free delivery within select locations in Dubai, and cash-back offers. www.arabind.com.

Health update> A HEALTHIER BACTERIA

So you've heard about probiotics, the bacteria added to yoghurt and dairy products, which aids the digestive tract and immunity. But have you heard of prebiotics? This is a food fibre which occurs in plants, and helps maintain and stimulate healthy bacteria growth in your colon, to also help digestion. Foods that are rich in prebiotics include wholegrains, leeks, onions, asparagus, miso, bananas and garlic. Some of the other benefits of prebiotics include an increase in healthy bacteria and absorption of calcium and magnesium, decrease in dangerous bacteria in the colon such as candida albicans, strengthening of bones, and blood sugar modulation.

Look what we found!

3 great new products for your kitchen



Feast on this delicious Japanese mochi ice cream in flavours such as green tea, to end your meal with a gourmet dessert at home. Dhs60 at secretsfinefood.com.

Get your kids to enjoy their vitamins with Yaya's gelatin and gluten-free animal-shaped chewy gums that are made from real fruit juices. Dhs59 at leading pharmacies.



Enjoy gourmet teas such as green tea, chamomile, and black Ceylon – all infused with saffron strands – from the newly launched La Perse's Saffron tea collection. Dhs45 at Lafayette Gourmet.



Compiled by NICOLA MONTEATH | Photographs SUPPLIED; SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Chef skills

Learn to: Cook mussels

This delicious, sustainable shellfish is also surprisingly simple to cook. Follow Mary Cadogan's step-by-step guide to preparing mussels.

Photographs MYLES NEW

Mussels with tomatoes & chilli

SERVES 2 EASILY DOUBLED

● PREP 20 MINS ● COOK 8-10 MINS

Easy | Iron | Omega-3 | 1 of 5-a-day | Superhealthy

This dish makes a fantastic supper for two on a balmy early summer evening.

2 ripe tomatoes
2 tbsp olive oil
1 garlic clove, finely chopped
1 shallot, finely chopped
1 red or green chilli, deseeded and finely chopped
Small glass of dry white wine
1 tsp tomato paste
Pinch of sugar
1kg cleaned mussels
Good handful of basil leaves

1 Prepare the mussels as shown here.
2 Put the tomatoes in a heatproof bowl. Cover with boiling water, leave for 3 mins, then drain and peel. Quarter the tomatoes and scoop out and discard the seeds using a teaspoon. Roughly chop the tomato flesh.
3 Heat the oil in a large pan with a tight-fitting lid. Add the garlic, shallot and chilli, then gently fry for 2-3 mins until softened. Pour in the wine and add the tomatoes, paste, sugar and seasoning (remember, mussels are naturally salty). Stir well and simmer for 2 mins.
4 Tip in the mussels and give them a stir. Cover tightly and steam for 3-4 mins, shaking the pan halfway through, until the shells have opened.
5 Discard any shells that remain shut, then divide the mussels between two bowls and add the basil leaves. Provide a large bowl for the empty shells.

PER SERVING 267 kcals, protein 20g, carbs 11g, fat 14g, sat fat 2g, fibre 1g, sugar 6.5g, salt 1.16g



Food styling MARY CADOGAN | Styling ARABELLA MCNIE

BUYING MUSSELS

It's best to buy from a good fishmonger or fish counter on the day you plan to cook them, if possible. Choose sustainably harvested mussels if they are wild (hand gathered) or farmed. Fresh mussels will have wet shiny shells and smell of the sea.

When you get home, rinse the mussels and put them in a large bowl covered with damp kitchen paper. Do not cover with water. Store them in the fridge for up to 24 hours until you are ready to cook them.

EQUIPMENT

- Small sharp knife
- Colander
- Large pan with tightly fitting lid, preferably glass so you can see when the shells have opened
- Chopping board



Tip the mussels into the sink or a large bowl of cold water. Swish them around with your hands to wash them thoroughly. Use a small sharp knife to scrape off any barnacles attached to the shells. Discard any mussels with broken shells.



Pull off the beards using the knife to help you – they just need a good tug. The beard is the brown wispy bit hanging out of the join in the shells. Not all mussels will have beards.



If any mussels are open, tap them sharply against the side of the sink, worktop or with a knife. If they don't close, discard them – they are dead and not edible.



Rinse the mussels again in fresh cold water to remove any bits of shell or barnacle, and drain in a colander. Prepare the dish as shown in the recipe here, or for an even simpler option, simply tip the mussels into a large pan, then add 1 small glass of white wine (for 1kg mussels) and 1 chopped shallot. The pan should not be more than half full – the mussels need plenty of space to move around so that they cook thoroughly.



Set the pan over a high heat and cover tightly with a lid. When the pan starts to steam, cook the mussels for 3-4 mins, shaking the pan from time to time to ensure they cook evenly. They are cooked when the shells have opened. Mussels that have not opened are fine to eat if they can be easily opened.



Remove the pan from the heat to stop the mussels cooking any further. Sprinkle with chopped parsley, then spoon them into warmed bowls and pour over the pan juices. GF

Modern Middle Eastern

Forget tacky takeouts or greasy grills – try these home-style Arabic recipes, given a lighter twist by Palestinian chef Joudie Kalla, to discover cuisine from the Levant as you've never had before!



Joudie Kalla is a London-based chef who has been working at leading restaurants, and with Michelin-starred chefs, for over 15 years. The Leith's School of Food & Wine alumna now runs her own catering business, Baity Kitchen. She specialises in fresh, healthy, and easy Middle Eastern cooking, inspired by family recipes passed down to her through the generations.

Text & coordination: SUDESHNA GHOSH; Photographs: SUPPLIED



Fatayer

MAKES 24 ● PREP 30 MINS
● COOK 12-15 MINS A little effort

400g self raising flour
80g cold butter
1 tsp salt
80g yoghurt
40ml water
1 egg yolk, plus a bit more for brushing pastry
1 tbsp cumin seeds
1 tbsp chilli flakes
FOR THE MEAT MIX:
200g beef mince
200g lamb mince
½ an onion, grated
2 cloves of garlic, grated
1 apple, cored and grated
1 tsp cinnamon
1 tsp nutmeg
1 tsp ginger powder
1 bunch of parsley
1 tbsp pomegranate molasses
1 tsp smoked paprika
1 tsp crushed chillies
1-2 tsp salt
Pomegranate seeds, for garnish

1 To make the pastry, mix the flour and butter to create a breadcrumb texture. Add the egg yolk, yoghurt and water and combine the dough. Just before it has all come together, add the chilli and the cumin seeds and knead the dough till it is slightly smooth. Refrigerate until needed.
2 Mix all the spices, garlic, and onions together and add the meat; combine well and set aside.
3 Remove the pastry from the fridge and on a floured surface, place your pastry and cut into three pieces (this will help control the dough). Roll the dough out until you have reached ½ cm thickness. Cut out 8cm circles and set them on a baking tray. (You will have some dough left over which you can use for something else.)
4 Place the meat mix in the centre of a dough disc and close it by pinching in the side, until it has folded to become a diamond shape.
5 Brush the pastry with an egg wash. Bake at 200C for about 12-15 mins, until they are golden.

Betinjan wa filfil mahshi

SERVES 4-6 ● PREP 30 MINS
● COOK 1.5 HRS Easy

2 medium aubergines
4 bell peppers (assorted colours)
200g basmati rice
700ml tomato passata
1 large brown onion, finely chopped
1 large bunch of parsley
6 tbsp olive oil (is this tsp. tbsp.?)

1 Preheat the oven to 180C. Slice the top of the aubergines and peppers, keeping the tops aside to make a lid. Hollow out the aubergine, and remove the ribs and seeds from the peppers and set aside.
2 Roughly chop the flesh from one aubergine and put into a bowl. Add the rice, half the passata, the onion, ¾ of the parsley and 4 spoons of the olive oil. Season and mix well.
3 Fill the hollowed out vegetables with the mixture – make sure not to overfill. Put the tops back on and place in an oven proof dish to fit them snugly.
4 Add 150ml water and the rest of the olive oil to the remaining passata. Season and pour over the vegetables.
5 Cook in the oven for 1½ hrs, turning the vegetables halfway through, and once more just before serving. The vegetables should be soft, browned and almost falling apart. Sprinkle with parsley and serve. >>



Molokhia with chicken and rice

SERVES 4 ● PREP 10 MINS
● COOK 40 MINS Easy

4 chicken breasts
4 cardamom pods
1l water
1 large onion, quartered
1 packet Molokhia, smooth
1 cube of chicken stock
500ml water
2 nests (need this in grams) of vermicelli, gently crushed
2 tbsp olive oil
200g Egyptian rice
400ml water
4 cloves of garlic, bashed
3 tbsp olive oil
2 shallots, finely diced
1 green chilli, chopped
1 red chilli, chopped
3 tbsp red wine vinegar
Juice of 1 lemon
Salt, to taste
Pita bread (optional, as a side)

1 Place chicken breasts in 500ml of the water, adding the quartered onion and cardamom pods. Season and leave to boil.
2 Cook the molokhia in 500ml of water and the chicken stock cube. Let it come to the boil and reduce heat to simmer.
3 In another pot, add the crushed vermicelli and toast it with some olive oil. Once it has browned slightly, add the Egyptian rice and toss it around. Cover with 400ml water and season with salt. Cook on medium heat for 20 mins.
4 While the Molokhia is cooking, heat the olive oil in a pan on a medium heat. Add the garlic and lightly brown. Add this to the molokhia and mix well.
5 Chop the chillies, add them to the vinegar and lemon and season with salt.
6 To serve, add the rice mixture into four bowls, topping with molokhia soup and poached chicken. Dress it with the vinegar and chilli mix, serve with pita bread, if you like.



Tahini brownie

SERVES 4 ● PREP 10 MINS
● COOK 20 MINS Easy

200g dark chocolate
300g caster sugar
300g flour
300ml freshly squeezed orange juice
300g Tahini
1 tsp baking powder

1 Melt the chocolate in a microwave oven or double boiler.
2 Add the tahini to the orange juice. Pour over the melted chocolate, add the sugar and mix everything together.
3 Measure and sift the flour and baking powder, and pour on top of the chocolate tahini mix.
4 Grease and line an 8in pan with parchment paper or baking paper and pour your mix in, getting it into every corner. Bake 180C for 20 mins. Cut into squares and serve. GF

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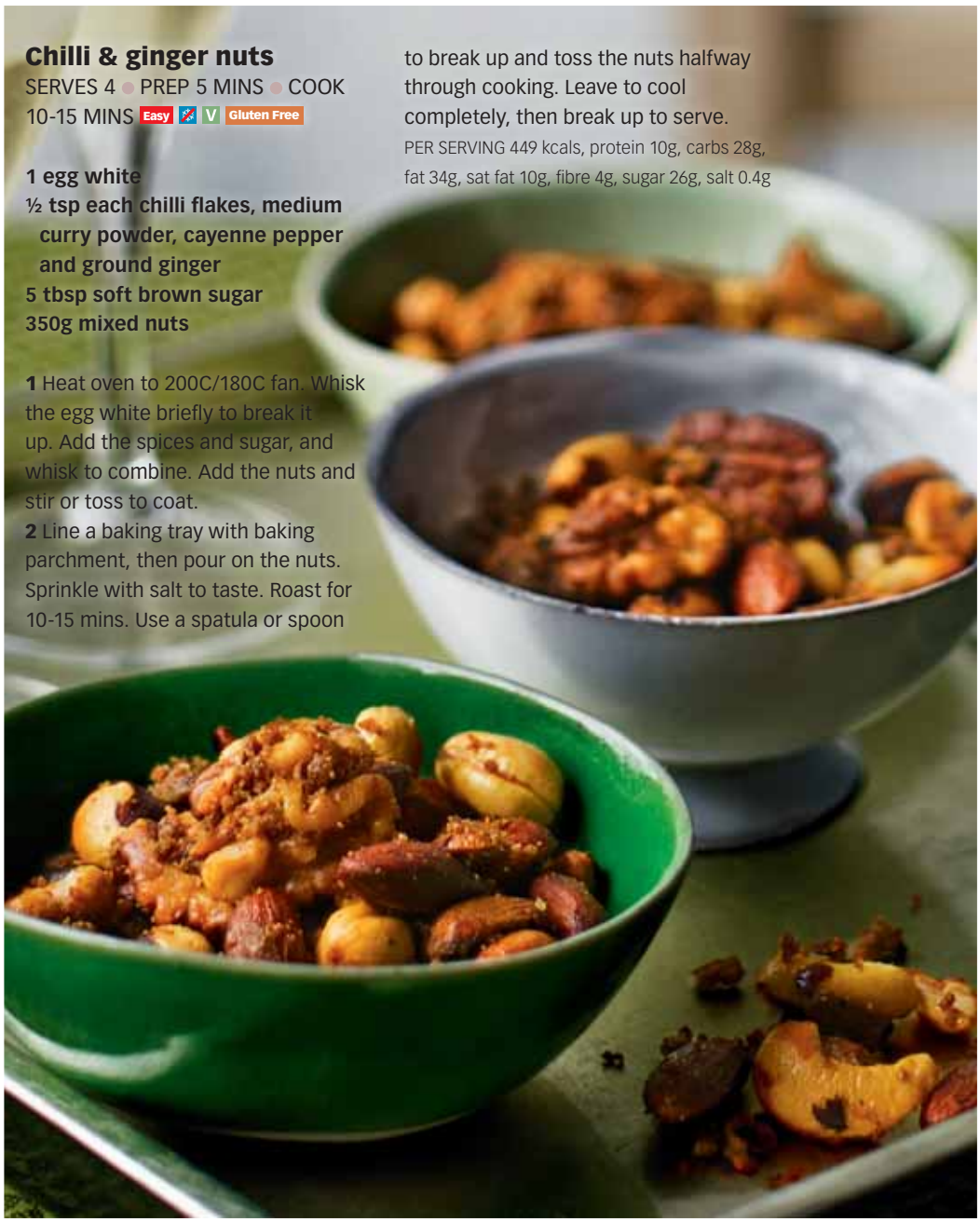
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James Martin's KITCHEN

Easy Thursday night



BBC host James Martin creates a fresh and fast feast for a relaxed start to the weekend! Photographs ADRIAN LAWRENCE



Chilli & ginger nuts

SERVES 4 ● PREP 5 MINS ● COOK 10-15 MINS Easy V Gluten Free

1 egg white
½ tsp each chilli flakes, medium curry powder, cayenne pepper and ground ginger
5 tbsp soft brown sugar
350g mixed nuts

1 Heat oven to 200C/180C fan. Whisk the egg white briefly to break it up. Add the spices and sugar, and whisk to combine. Add the nuts and stir or toss to coat.
2 Line a baking tray with baking parchment, then pour on the nuts. Sprinkle with salt to taste. Roast for 10-15 mins. Use a spatula or spoon to break up and toss the nuts halfway through cooking. Leave to cool completely, then break up to serve.

PER SERVING 449 kcals, protein 10g, carbs 28g, fat 34g, sat fat 10g, fibre 4g, sugar 26g, salt 0.4g

Chicken teriyaki skewers with griddled spring onions

SERVES 4 ● PREP 15 MINS PLUS SOAKING ● COOK 15 MINS

Easy Low fat Gluten Free

75ml teriyaki sauce (or gluten-free alternative)
2 tbsp clear honey
1 tbsp soy sauce
4 chicken breasts, cut into chunks
Bunch of spring onions, trimmed
1 tbsp vegetable oil

1 If using wooden skewers, soak them in water for 20 mins to prevent them from burning. Heat grill to high and line a baking tray with foil. Mix together the teriyaki sauce, honey and soy. Add the chicken pieces and mix to coat. Thread the chicken onto the skewers. Place on the lined baking tray and cook under the grill for about 15 mins until charred, turning and basting from time to time with any extra sauce. Check that the chicken is cooked through before serving.
2 Meanwhile, heat a griddle pan until hot. Toss the spring onions in the vegetable oil and some seasoning, tip into the pan and cook for 3-4 mins until nicely charred and softened. Serve with the chicken skewers.

PER SERVING 190 kcals, protein 31g, carbs 7g, fat 4g, sat fat 1g, fibre none, sugar 7g, salt 2.5g >>

Food styling KATY GREENWOOD | Styling LUIS PERAL | Wine notes SARAH JANE EVANS MW


Coconut &
lime rice
Chicken teriyaki
skewers with griddled
spring onions
Spiced cucumber
& coriander salad

Spiced cucumber & coriander salad

SERVES 4 ● PREP 15 MINS ● NO COOK Easy V Low fat 2 of 5-a-day Good for you Gluten Free

1 red chilli, deseeded and finely diced
50g sliced pickled ginger, with 1 tbsp juice
Zest and juice of 2 limes
4 tbsp olive oil
1 cucumber
70g rocket or baby leaf salad
Small pack of coriander, roughly chopped
Small pack of mint, roughly chopped

1 Combine the chilli, ginger and its juice, lime zest and juice, and olive oil in a large bowl.
2 Use a vegetable peeler to peel the cucumber into ribbons, discarding the central seedy part. Toss through the chilli dressing along with the salad leaves, coriander and mint. Serve immediately.
PER SERVING 126 kcals, protein 2g, carbs 4g, fat 12g, sat fat 2g, fibre 2g, sugar 3g, salt none

Coconut & lime rice

SERVES 4 ● PREP 5 MINS ● COOK 15 MINS Easy V Gluten Free

250g jasmine or basmati rice
5 tbsp desiccated coconut
Zest and juice of 1 lime
Handful of coriander, roughly chopped

Cook the rice following pack instructions. Add the coconut about 5 mins before the end of the cooking time. Stir in the lime zest and juice, and the coriander. Serve immediately.
PER SERVING 340 kcals, protein 6g, carbs 49g, fat 12g, sat fat 10g, fibre 3g, sugar 1g, salt none GF



This is my favourite type of food for a Thursday night – you can make all the dishes in under an hour, then put them in the middle of the table so everyone can dive in and help themselves. My menu serves four, but can easily be doubled to feed eight.

-James Martin



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Tuck shop treats

Take a trip down memory lane to create five gorgeous bakes inspired by sweet shop favourites.

RECIPES SARAH COOK AND CASSIE BEST Photographs MYLES NEW



Caramel button cupcakes with a secret centre

Food styling SARAH COOK and CASSIE BEST | Styling SUE ROWLANDS

Caramel button cupcakes

MAKES 12 CUPCAKES
● PREP 30 MINS ● COOK 20 MINS
Easy ❄ UNICED CUPCAKES ONLY

175g butter, softened
175g light muscovado sugar
2 large eggs
175g self-raising flour
2 tbsp milk
Homemade caramel buttons (see recipe below)
FOR THE ICING
400g canned caramel
200g tub full-fat cream cheese
100g salted butter, softened
450g golden icing sugar

1 Heat oven to 180C/160C fan and line a 12-hole muffin tin with cases. Put the butter and sugar into a mixing bowl, cream with an electric whisk until smooth and pale. Add the eggs and whisk again, then add the flour and milk, and mix with a spatula until well combined. Divide the mixture between the muffin cases. Bake for 18-20 mins until springy and a skewer comes out clean. Leave to cool.
2 Mix 140g of the canned caramel with the cream cheese, butter and icing sugar with an electric hand whisk, until smooth. Chill for 10 mins. Cut a hole in the centre of each cupcake (we used an apple corer) and fill with remaining caramel. Transfer the icing to a piping bag fitted with a round nozzle and swirl over the cupcakes. *Will keep for 3 days if kept in the fridge.*

PER CUPCAKE 667 kcals, protein 5g, carbs 87g, fat 33g, sat fat 21g, fibre 1g, sugar 76g, salt 0.8g

Homemade caramel buttons

Place **60g broken up Caramac bars**, (a white chocolate caramel bar, available in select supermarkets) into a bowl and melt in short blasts in the microwave, stirring every 20 secs or so. Place **10 soft toffees** in a saucepan with **a splash of milk** and gently heat until melted. Transfer to a piping bag. Line a baking tray with baking parchment and spoon small blobs of the melted Caramac on top. Swirl the toffee sauce over the Caramac discs and leave to set.

Giant jaffa orange cake

CUTS INTO 10 SLICES ● PREP 35 MINS PLUS SETTING AND COOLING
● COOK 1 HR 5 MINS
A little effort ❄ SPONGE ONLY

250g pack butter, softened, plus extra for greasing
300g golden caster sugar
4 large eggs
100g full-fat natural yoghurt
300g plain flour
2 tsp baking powder
Zest of 4 large oranges (use the oranges below)
FOR THE ORANGE JELLY
Juice of 5 large oranges (about 500ml), save the zest of 1 orange to finish
100g golden caster sugar
6 gelatine leaves
FOR THE CHOCOLATE GANACHE
300ml pot double cream
200g milk chocolate, finely chopped
100g dark chocolate, finely chopped
TO FINISH
2 tbsp apricot jam
Zest of 1 orange

1 First make the jelly. Grease a 20cm round cake tin and line with cling film (you can use the 23cm tin that you will bake the cake in, but you'll have to make this the day before so that you can remove it before making the cake). Remove the zest from 4 of the oranges and set aside for the cake. Tip the orange juice and sugar into a saucepan and gently heat to dissolve the sugar. Meanwhile, soak the gelatine leaves in cold water for a few mins until soft. Remove the gelatine from the water, squeeze out any excess and add to the warm orange juice, stir until the gelatine has dissolved. Pour the liquid into the lined cake tin and chill for at least 4 hrs or preferably overnight.
2 Heat oven to 160C/140C fan and line a 23cm round cake tin with baking parchment. Tip all the cake ingredients into a large mixing bowl and combine with an electric hand whisk until smooth. Spoon into the tin and smooth over the surface. Bake in the centre of the oven for 55 mins, or until a skewer inserted comes out clean. Cool in the tin for 15 mins, then invert onto a wire rack and leave to cool completely.
3 Now make the ganache. Heat the cream in a small pan until hot. Put the chocolate in a small bowl and pour over the cream, leave for 10 mins, then mix well – you should be left with a smooth chocolate sauce. Leave at room temperature until the ganache cools and thickens a little (you can put it in the fridge to speed this up, but keep an eye on it, as it will set quickly).
4 To assemble the cake, place it on a cake stand and trim the top to give you a flat surface. Warm the apricot jam in the microwave until a little runny. Paint it over the top of the cake, then flip the orange jelly out of its tin, and position on top. Using a palette knife, swirl the chocolate ganache over the orange jelly, letting it dribble down the sides of the cake a little. Serve straight away or within 24 hours.

PER SLICE 822 kcals, protein 10g, carbs 85g, fat 49g, sat fat 29g, fibre 2g, sugar 64g, salt 0.8g >>



Plenty of wow factor



Kids, old and young, will love these

Jammy heart drops

MAKES 18 BISCUITS ● PREP 55 MINS ● COOK 8-12 MINS Easy ❄

250g pack unsalted butter, softened
140g golden caster sugar
2 tsp vanilla extract
300g plain flour
Jar of seedless raspberry jam
2 tbsp custard powder
85g icing sugar

1 Beat the butter and sugar together until pale and fluffy. Beat in the vanilla for a few secs, then use a wooden spoon to stir in the flour with ¼ tsp salt. Roll the dough into 36 small balls (the easiest way to get this right is to divide the dough into quarters – each quarter then makes 9 balls).
2 Heat oven to 180C/160C fan. Line two baking sheets with baking parchment. Squish 2 balls of dough together on the paper, keeping the 'round' edges of the balls at the top, but pinching together at the base where they meet, so they make a rough heart shape. Flatten with the palm of your hand to a biscuit, then press in heart-shaped 'dent' for the jam – thumbs and fingers are perfect for this. Repeat with remaining dough balls leaving a little space between each finished heart shape for spreading.
3 Spoon the jam into a food bag (or disposable piping bag), snip off the end and pipe roughly 2-3 tsp jam into the thumb-heart dips you have made in each biscuit. Bake for 8-12 mins until pale golden and crisp. Cool on the trays.
4 Mix the custard powder and icing sugar, then dribble in enough water to make a runny icing. Drizzle all over the cooled biscuits, allow to set for at least 10 mins, then serve or store in a biscuit tin.

PER BISCUIT (18) 265 kcals, protein 1g, carbs 37g, fat 12g, sat fat 7g, fibre none, sugar 25g, salt 0.1g



Curly twirlies

MAKES 12 ● PREP 20 MINS ● COOK 20 MINS Easy ❄ RE-CRISP IN A LOW OVEN BEFORE EATING

140g soft toffees
2 x tubes of 6 ready-to-roll croissants
100ml milk
50g dark chocolate drops – or use a block of chocolate and roughly chop
Golden icing sugar, for dusting

1 Heat oven to 200C/180C fan. Put the toffees into a small pan with the milk and melt over a very low heat, stirring occasionally to bring together to a smooth sauce. Cool off the heat for 1-2 mins until a little less molten and thickened slightly.
2 Cover two baking sheets with baking parchment. Unroll one tube of croissant dough. Pinch together the diagonal perforated seams, but divide the dough into three rectangles along the straight crossing seams. Cut each rectangle into 4 long, thin strips – so you end up with 12. Drizzle a little toffee along the length of each strip, then scatter with some chocolate drops. Unroll the other dough and cut into the same size strips, then sandwich together with the toffee-choc covered ones. Holding the ends of each strip, twist tightly and lay on the prepared baking sheets – they'll expand a little.
3 Once all are shaped, bake for 12-15 mins until golden and crisp. Dust with a little golden icing sugar to serve and enjoy best, freshly baked.

PER TWIRLY 246 kcals, protein 4g, carbs 28g, fat 13g, sat fat 7g, fibre 1g, sugar 13g, salt 0.9g



Fudgy fig roll

CUTS INTO 10 SLICES ● PREP 1 HR PLUS SOFTENING AND COOLING ● COOK 12-15 MINS Easy

140g soft dried figs, chopped
1 medium very ripe banana
Knob of butter, for greasing
3 large eggs, separated
225g light muscovado sugar
120g wholemeal flour
1 tsp bicarbonate of soda
1 tsp ground cinnamon
Good grating of fresh nutmeg (optional)
4 tbsp golden caster sugar
FOR THE FILLING
300ml double cream
4 tbsp icing sugar, sifted
About 250-300g fig jam or conserve

1 Cover the figs with boiling water in a bowl and set aside to soften for 30 mins. Drain and mash well with the banana.
2 Heat oven to 190C/170C fan. Grease a Swiss roll tin – about 34 x 24cm. Line the base with baking parchment.
3 Separate the eggs, collecting the whites in a large clean bowl. Beat with an electric whisk until stiff peaks hold on the end of your whisk, then add half the sugar and beat until thick and glossy.
4 In another mixing bowl, beat the yolks with the remaining sugar until pale. Whisk in the mashed fig mixture. Fold into the meringue mixture until well combined. Mix the flour, bicarbonate of soda, spices and a pinch of salt. Sprinkle it over the wet mixture and very gently fold in, again until well combined. Gently scrape and spread the batter into the tin. Bake for 12-15 mins until springy to the touch.
5 Meanwhile, lay a clean tea towel on the bench (this helps keep the cake nice and moist). Scatter the caster sugar over the towel, flip on the cake, peel off the parchment, then roll up from the shortest side with the tea towel into a Swiss roll. Lift onto a wire rack to cool completely.
6 Unroll the cake gently. Using electric beaters, whisk the cream and icing sugar together to soft peaks. Spread the fig jam over the cake, followed by the cream. Roll up again and slice to serve.

PER SLICE 456 kcals, protein 5g, carbs 67g, fat 19g, sat fat 11g, fibre 3g, sugar 60g, salt 0.4g GF

BANANAS NOT RIPE ENOUGH?

Stick one in the freezer – overnight is ideal – then gently defrost in the microwave (or at room temp) the next day. It should now be squishy, perfect for making a cake.



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A day in the life of a kitchen

Whether it's a fresh, sunny start to the morning, an indulgent afternoon tea, or a roast dinner, your kitchen is where all these meals are brought to life. Here are some stylish ideas for dressing up your kitchen with tableware and appliances, whatever the hour and occasion. Photographs AVI CHATTERJEE
Styling MARY-KEI MACFARLANE

8am BRIGHT FOR BREAKFAST

Kit up your kitchen with colourful, fun pieces that will help kick-start the day on the right note

1 Kenwood kMix Toaster (TTM028) in yellow sherbet, Dhs275, Jashanmal stores. **2** Oak board with handle, Dhs179, Crate and Barrel. **3** Seersucker napkin, Dhs19, Crate and Barrel. **4** Honey pot with dipper (yellow), Dhs145, Tavola. **5** Modulo color tea bowls, Dhs40, Guy Degrenne. **6** Ritzenhoff breakfast plate, Dhs88, Harvest Home. **7** Butter knives, stylists own. **8** Emma Bridgewater dinner knife, Dhs75, Harvest Home **9** Coppa mug (orange), Dhs50, Tavola. **10** Mustard plastic people spoons (set of four), Dhs28, Harvest Home **11** Modulo color pink and green bread plates, Dhs30, Guy Degrenne. **12** Small casserole, Dhs45, Harvest Home. **13** Loopdedoo place mats (lemon and rose), Dhs25 each, Crate and Barrel. **14** Fete napkin, Dhs38, Crate and Barrel. **15** Modulo color anise bowl, Dhs70, Guy Degrenne. >>

Photographer's assistant: TRIPARNA CHATERJEE; Additional styling: NICOLA MONTEATH; Coordination: SUDESHNA GHOSH & NICOLA MONTEATH



1pm QUICK & EASY LUNCH

With a few napkins, wooden boards and pretty plates, you will be all set for a light, healthy lunch of salad, soup and sandwiches

1 Set of four plates, Dhs195, Harvest Home. **2** Set of four dinner knives and forks, Dhs33.75 each, Crate and Barrel. **3** Helena pear green linen napkin, Dhs35, Crate and Barrel. **4** Moulinex Slim Force DD855 hand blender, Dhs361, at leading supermarkets. **5** White Raised soup dish, Dhs25 each, Zara Home. **6** Kelsey linen napkin, Dhs39, Crate and Barrel. **7** Beau Manoir mirror finish (50 pieces) cutlery set, Dhs2,900, Guy Degrenne. **8** Caesna cheese knife, Dhs69, Crate and Barrel. **9** White bowl, stylists own. **10** Garden Trading Artisan wooden board, Dhs330, Harvest Home. **11** Blue polka-dot butter knife, stylists own. **12** Newport table individual butter dish, Dhs130, Guy Degrenne. **13** Blue plate and small bowl, stylists own. >>

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4. GARLIC TWIST MINCER CLEAR DHS 85

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4pm RETRO AFTERNOON TEA

Turn your kitchen into a vintage-chic haven while you bake up a storm of sweet treats, with florals, pastels and girlie gorgeousness



1 KitchenAid Artisan 4.8L Tilt Head Stand Mixer (5KSM150PSB), Dhs2,799, Al Ghandi Electronics. **2** Baking tray, stylists own. **3** Melamine tray, Dhs18, Harvest Home. **4** Cuisipro balloon whisk, Dhs29, Tavola. **5** Garden Trading set of four ceramic measuring spoons, Dhs42, Harvest Home. **6** Loopdedoo Placemat in Rose, Dhs25, Crate and Barrel. **7** Modulo white bowl 20cm, Dhs90, Guy Degrenne. **8** Wedgwood polka dot cake stand, Dhs385, Bloomingdale's Home. **9** Shibori yellow napkin, Dhs35, Crate and Barrel. **10** Royal Albert Rose Confetti collection sugar pot, Dhs375, Bloomingdale's Home. **11** Boreal Satin white round dessert plate 22.5cm, Dhs70, Guy Degrenne. **12** Royal Albert Rose Confetti collection tea cup and saucer, Dhs175, Bloomingdale's Home. **13** Blue sugar spoon and saucer, stylists own. **14** Royal Albert Polka Rose collection teapot, Dhs475, Bloomingdale's Home. **15** Versailles tea cup and saucer, Dhs85, Tavola. **16** Emma Bridgewater Rose and bee ½ pint jug, Dhs120, Harvest Home. **17** MW Giotto GD Edge oval butter tray, Dhs325, Bloomingdale's Home. **18** Helena Azalea linen napkin, Dhs35, Crate and Barrel. **19** Arthur Price Cake server, Dhs150, Bloomingdale's Home. >>



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1 Oak chopping block (Medium), Dhs149, Crate and Barrel. **2** Mauviel M'Heritage copper-cast iron sauce pan, Dhs849, Crate and Barrel. **3** Paris pepper mill, Dhs85, Tavola. **4** Opal wine glass, Dhs90, Harvest Home. **5** Helena pear linen napkin, Dhs35, Crate and Barrel. **6** Bronze mirror finish 24 pcs box solid handle cutlery set, Dhs1,990, Guy Degrenne. **7** Butchers string, stylists own. **8** Feast platter, Dhs229, Crate and Barrel. **9** Wooden plate, stylists own. **10** Helena Vanilla linen napkin, Dhs35, Crate and Barrel. GF

Shot on location at and all food from Sapori di Bice, Citywalk. Call 04-4321359.



MY KITCHEN

Shaikha loves spending time in her bright, colourful kitchen

Shaikha Al Ali

Emirati food blogger Shaika Al Ali invites Nicola Monteath into her favourite spot in her home. Photographs by ANAS CHERUR

Shaikha Al Ali, founder of cookery blog, Whenshaikhacooks.com, spends almost all her time in the kitchen. The Marketing major student at Zayed University Dubai tells us that her kitchen, flooded with natural light every morning, makes her feel more energetic and positive as soon as she steps into it. Although she lives with her parents, Shaikha was actively involved in redesigning their home kitchen, which is her 'corner'. Shaikha loves cooking, and films for her YouTube channel, and prepares sweet treats and ice creams to sell to customers – via her blog and Instagram account – all from her shabby chic-style kitchen in her Jumeirah home. She gives us the grand tour, talking us through all the changes she made to the kitchen.

What did the kitchen look like initially?

There was no natural light at all – it was a very dark space! We had to switch the lights on by around 3pm every day and it was so depressing. The in-built cabinets were dark brown, the walls were dull and the floor tiles were worn out. The space was actually quite small as well, but we broke down the wall to extend the kitchen and add a dining table and storage space.

What were you looking for, from the new kitchen?

Mainly a lot of natural light. We wanted a large, airy space where my siblings and I could relax, dine and do our homework as well. Since the kitchen was small, my mother and I decided to open it up, to have the dining table towards one end of the kitchen, a small walk-in pantry for the fridge and other ingredients, and the skylight feature above the dining table. We also painted all the in-built cabinets white, so that it looked neater.

How did you go about planning and designing the space?

The appliance cupboard, wooden dining table, and showcase – which double as storage space – were all from our old kitchen. It was all white and dark brown in colour. When we moved here, we painted the chairs green, the cupboard a turquoise blue shade and the cabinets, soft pink – I love white kitchens with a pop of colour from the tableware or accessories. Most of our paints are from Laura Ashley as they have a great selection.

Did you make any changes to the walls and floors?

Yes, the walls were extremely dull. We wallpapered it in light colours to suit the theme of the kitchen and give it a more spacious feel. For the floor, we used marble, as it reflects light and is easy to clean as well.

What else did you change?

We replaced the kitchen island countertop with marble, as the old one had worn off. We also swapped regular stainless steel sinks for these white undermount kitchen sinks – to make more space for dish washing – and the kitchen taps for the retractable option. Apart from that, it was just minor changes like fabrics for dining chairs, and placing artificial plants all around, to bring that element of nature to the kitchen.

What about the appliances and gadgets?

I have a few favourites like my Zwilling J. A. Henckels knives and a cast-iron pan which I display proudly. The kitchen mixer, toaster, kettle, and other gadgets are mostly white or stainless steel, and are tucked away in the appliance cupboard when not in use.



Fresh flowers put the finishing touches to the dining area



A predominantly white palette make this a soothing, sophisticated space

SHAIKHA'S SHOPPING TIPS

- Global Village is a great place to find interesting tableware. I bought tagine pots from the Moroccan pavilion, and copper trays from the Afghanistan stall recently.
- Invest in a good set of knives. I love my Zwilling J. A. Henckels knives which were a recommendation from a friend.
- A good cast-iron pan will keep for years, and you can pass it on to your children too.

Do you plan to do more with the kitchen?
We are extending the skylight to the small dining area, which can be accessed from the kitchen, with a connecting door. I can't wait for it, as it will be a nice place to entertain, rather than gathering and serving food in the main kitchen itself.

Anything in particular you'd like to add?
I'd really like another cupboard for my cutlery and tableware. I buy lots of plates, trays and crockery, and I feel it's time to display them in a lovely glass cupboard instead of having them stacked away in a cabinet.



Everyday items add pops of colour to Shaikha's kitchen



Quirky finds are kept on display



Potted plants bring nature into the kitchen

GET THE LOOK



This chic Floral tray looks great on a kitchen island or a table too. Dhs119 at Jashanmal stores.



Get more use out of your kitchen taps, as Shaikha does, with this Hansgrohe Metris Single lever kitchen mixer with pull-out spray. Dhs1,350 at Hansgrohe showrooms.

These Waterhyacinth baskets make for chic storage solutions. From Dhs105 at Indigo Living.



Shaikha loves bright colours, like these hot pink Shiny Place mats. Dhs55 (for set of 2) at Zara Home.

Gadget spotlight

From large, investment appliances, to small countertop gadgets, these latest launches put the fun into functional.



1 Blending beauty

Upgrade from your existing blender to the high-speed JTC BLENDER with a BPA-free jug and six stainless-steel heavy duty blades which ensure the job is done efficiently. Features like the auto-timer and multiple pulse-setting-buttons (low, medium and high) give you maximum control – whether you're making soups, purées or smoothies. Dhs1,469 at citrusstv.com.

2 Pod perfection

The newest model from Nespresso is the Inissia coffee machine, a compact version which features a high-pressure pump and automatic power-off function. Inissia has a removable water tank of 0.4 litres, and an increased used capsule capacity of 11 – ideal for those who forget to clean out the capsule container after every use! Choose from a range of colours such as sky blue, black, white, red, orange and vanilla (ivory), to suit your kitchen colour scheme. Dhs550 at Nespresso boutiques.





3 Multipurpose maven

The stylish new Miele Pureline microwave oven, incorporates revolutionary M-touch user interface technology – which has a swipe function that allows you to scroll through menus and settings on the screen – to make for a true design-meets-function product. With sleek, minimalist glass frontage, the oven has a roomy XL cabinet, several automated settings, and a special automatic popcorn button! Four colour options are available, Dhs6,600 at Miele showrooms.

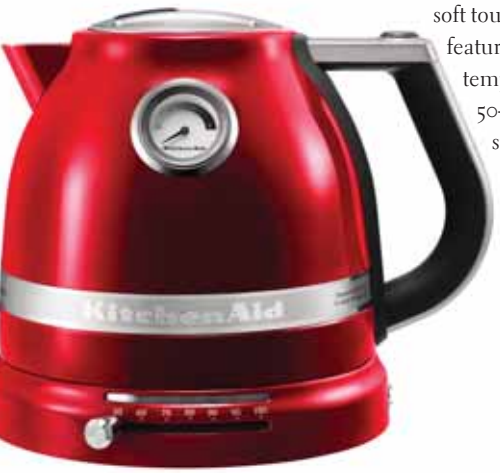
4 Top toaster

This cute Siemens TT63101GB compact toaster is guaranteed to fit snugly in any corner. The 900W toaster, available in chrome and white, has a cool touch feature to keep the body of the toaster from getting too hot when in use; electric sensor for consistent toasting; and a defrost setting. It also comes with an attachable stainless steel rack to warm up bread rolls, and a removable crumb tray. Dhs175 at Better Life showrooms.



5 Kettle couture

Make your kitchen just a little bit more stylish with this bright apple red KitchenAid Artisan 1.2 litre kettle. With a sleek metal finish and soft touch handle, the kettle's features include adjustable temperature settings (from 50-100 Celsius) with a retro-style gauge to view the reading while it's heating up. Water is kept hot for longer too, with the kettles dual wall construction – that means energy saving. Dhs845 at Al Ghandi Electronics.



6 Fantasy fridge

Looking for the ultimate refrigerator? Samsung's top-of-the range Top Mounted Freezer RT6000 is fitted with a power cool feature for rapid chilling, and a moist-fresh zone to maintain humidity levels. The deodorising filter and anti-bacterial protector not only helps eliminate odours, but also prevents early food spoilage. With serious eco credentials, the refrigerator's digital inverter technology distributes cool air when required – using 47 per cent less energy! Plus, it has a 2.3 litre capacity waist-high water dispenser. From Dhs2,199 at Samsung showrooms and leading electornic stores. GF



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Camilla created her light-filled kitchen in the extension of her Victorian house

MY KITCHEN

Camilla Schneideman

Camilla Schneideman, managing director of Leiths School of Food and Wine, shows Vanessa Berridge around her new kitchen.

Photographs GEOFF WILKINSON

Kitchens and cooking have always been a major part of Camilla Schneideman's life. In the Sixties, her parents, Mike and Susie, founded the influential kitchen shop Divertimenti, and Camilla worked there on the weekends, before going on to study drama at Manchester University.

She took the diploma course at Leiths in her mid-twenties, then set up the Divertimenti Cookery School in 2002. During two and a half years spent in Spain, she wrote The Divertimenti Cookbook. Camilla now lives in west London with her husband, Tom James, a naval architect, and their children, Rafa, six, and Rosie, four. She finished her kitchen a year ago.

What did you want from your kitchen?

It sounds a cliché, but I really did grow up at the kitchen table, and I wanted our children to do the same. So the kitchen needed to be uncluttered, but not too designer – that's not us at all.

How did you plan it?

We weren't allowed to build right across the back of the house, but making an L-shaped extension did create a perfect, light-filled niche. The kitchen is not enormous but has a lovely spacious feel, partly because we don't have enclosed cupboards high up – I like to be able to get to things easily. My mother always drilled into me that you need to be able to unload the dishwasher easily, so I have shelves above for the glass and china we use constantly.

How did you pick your appliances?

I chose a Falcon range with two ovens, and a big wok burner in the middle for Asian cooking and for paellas, which I tried to perfect while living in Spain. I fell in love with American fridges on a visit to a friend in Colorado, and the Fisher & Paykel model is the largest we could fit into the space. The space-saving, pull-out dishwasher is by the same manufacturer.

What about your units and worktop?

I like these plain, fade-into-the-background units, which don't have handles. The drawers are better than cupboards for storing saucepans. There's not much unit space, so we have magic pull-out corners. We took out the internal frame in the corner by the sink and squeezed in all our recycling bins. I looked at some lovely granite for the worktop, but decided instead on a less shiny

CAMILLA'S TOP TIPS

- If you can't afford a designer kitchen, which we couldn't, buy cheaper units, change the handles and spend on quality appliances.
- Always shop around online, especially for electrical goods – there are often discounts to be had. We made substantial savings by buying our appliances from the same supplier.
- Do your research – we saved quite a lot of money by choosing a cooker without a separate grill.
- One of the good things we did was put in a waste disposal – a more ecological way to get rid of kitchen waste.
- Don't think you have got to have everything right now. For example, we've bought these Ikea stools for the butcher's trolley, and I do want to replace them, but there's no hurry.



Inspired by her parents, Camilla chose to have a glass-fronted cabinet made instead of wall units. Items collected from her travels and her time at Divertimenti are displayed inside, protected from grease and dust



Shelves displaying treasured pieces of pottery and glass have been fitted into the framework of what was an exterior window



The sliding drawers take up less space than the pull-down door of a conventional dishwasher

reconstituted silestone. It's heat-resistant, easy to clean and doesn't show every smudge.

And the flooring?

We bought reclaimed floorboards which were in a terrible state. Once they were laid and sanded, I got quite stressed because I thought it had taken all the personality away. But the grey wash we put over the top is wearing down rather well. Tom did call this kitchen 50 shades of grey, but I like it because colourful things stand out and it doesn't look too busy.

Any extravagances?

Putting in a boiling water tap was probably my biggest indulgence, although Tom worked out that we'd save money. It's really handy as you can cook pasta in half the time, and we frequently have boiled eggs for breakfast.

Would you change anything?

I didn't take into account the depth of the fridge, and should have brought the larder unit forward so I'm not squeezing into the corner. But otherwise I love this kitchen – it works well.

GET THE LOOK



Make your kitchen colourful like Camilla's with this I Am Cafetiere French Press. Dhs59 at Ace.



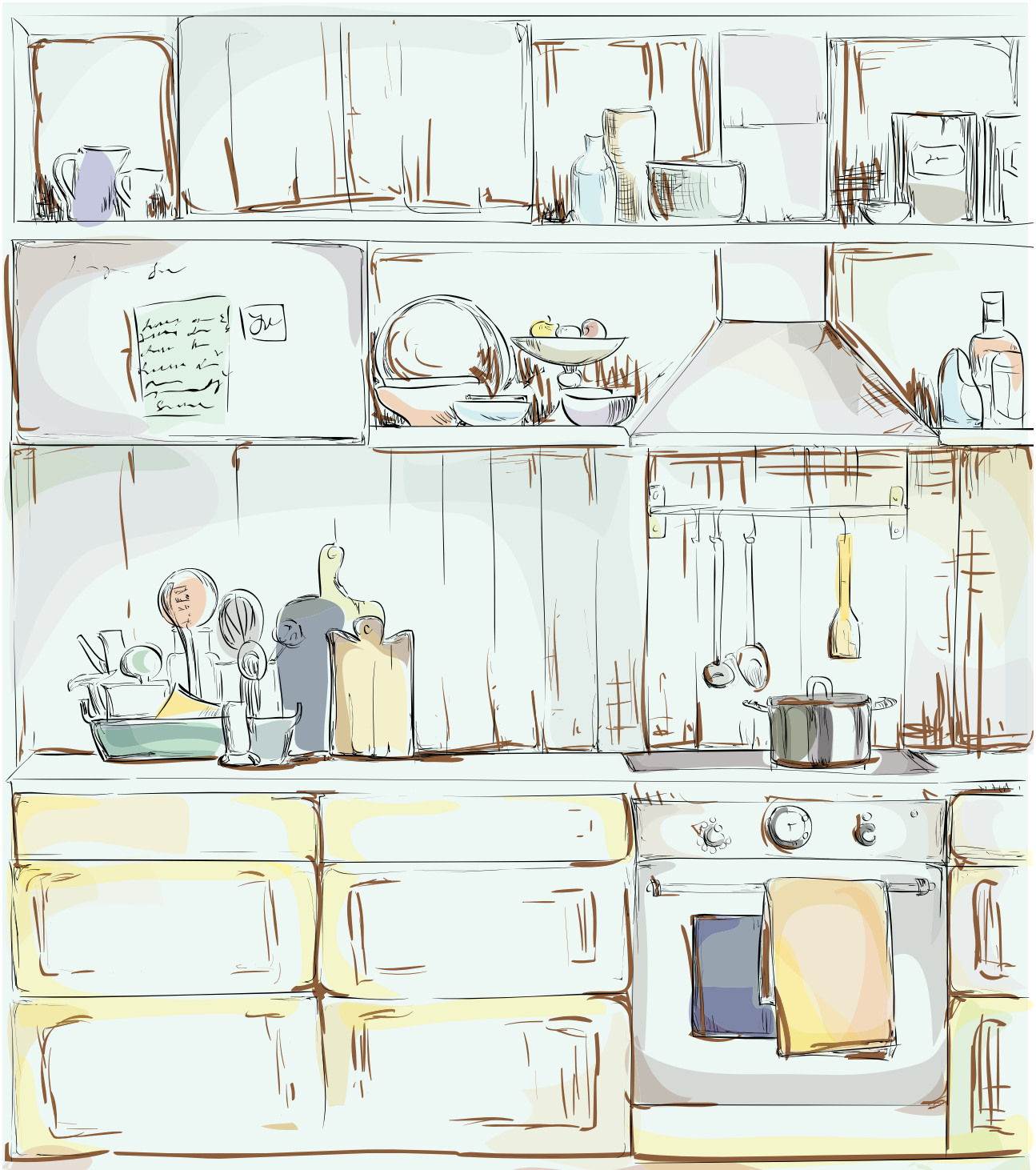
Camilla likes displaying pottery in open shelves and glass display cupboards. This Mint Ceramic jug is certainly worth showing off! Dhs289 at Indigo Living.



This Vinum Wine tasting glass is perfect for elegant dinner parties. Dhs135 at Tavola.



One of Camilla's favourite gadgets is her lemon squeezer, which keep pips from falling into the juice. Handheld lemon squeezer, Dhs35 at Lakeland.



Smart, simple kitchen makeovers

You don't have to strip down your kitchen to give it a facelift. These clever updates will do the trick, without breaking the bank. By Nicola Monteath.

We know that the kitchen is the heart of the home, whether you're using it for cooking while the kids do their homework, indulging in therapeutic baking, or preparing grocery lists over a cup of tea. Yet, the kitchen is probably the most overlooked when it comes to design updates. While it isn't always possible to undergo massive renovations, particularly in a rented home or apartment, it only take a few small steps to make the kitchen a more stylish, comfortable and welcoming space.

We asked kitchen design experts Tareq Skaik, Head of Design at kitchen and interior design company Algedra Interior Design Consultancy; Sophie Johnson, Interior design course tutor for Chelsea College of Arts Dubai; and Kirk Dmonte, Kitchen Specialist at Palmonade Kitchen Emporium, distributors of Ernestomeda Luxury Italian Kitchens, to share their tips for giving your kitchen a makeover with maximum impact and minimum fuss.

Make a splash

A backsplash can really lift the look of a kitchen. If you are after a more contemporary look, try toughened glass with the colour of your choice. "Playing with materials is a great and affordable way of personalising your space," says Sophie. Marble or limestone are also great options for backsplashes, as they add texture and character to a kitchen. According to Kirk, backsplashes with gloss or matt finish are easier to maintain and clean as well.

A beautiful display

If you have too many wall units in the kitchen, take out the doors of a few of them and showcase your nice crockery and kitchenware for everyone to see. If you'd rather not take down the units or doors, Sophie suggests placing reclaimed wood shelves, one above the other, on an empty wall. Tareq adds that shelves with crockery or family heirlooms on display, gives the area an elegant look.

Island inspiration

A kitchen island is a great feature, especially if you want more storage space, or an additional table surface – if you have the room for it. Instead of buying a new kitchen island, Tareq suggests repurposing old furniture such as a dresser or cabinet with drawers. Add a marble slab on top to give it a more polished look, and make it suitable for kitchen use. You could also paint it to match your kitchen colour scheme.

Light up

"Always use warm white LED lights in the kitchen, as it gives a natural tone and helps reduce electricity costs as well," says Tareq. You could also attach projector lights to the ceiling, and face it towards the kitchen island, so that the island becomes a focal point at night. To add a glamorous touch, you could also hang a glass, white, or black chandelier – whichever suits the kitchen colour scheme – over an area you want to highlight, such as a kitchen island. If you don't already have under cupboard lighting, try to install at least two lights under each cupboard, to shed light on the kitchen counter. "Lighting doesn't necessarily have to stop at spotlights or under cupboard lighting. You can also place large pillar candles in corners of the kitchen counter, to give it warmth," says Tareq.

Wall fashion

As with most areas of a home, the best way to transform a space is by changing the colour of the walls. "A feature wall in a bold colour is a great way to make any space look more modern, and can bring a traditional kitchen to life," says Sophie. Tareq recommends placing a large mirror on the wall adjacent to an open kitchen, to give the illusion of a larger space. Tiles also work great for feature walls and are durable, easy to clean and fantastic at reflecting light. Rather than using a single colour for tiling, cover the wall in mosaic tiles for a contemporary feel.

Cabinet solutions

An easier way to brighten up the kitchen is to simply wallpaper or paint over the cabinetry. "Always use contrasting colours in the kitchen. If you have light coloured appliances and accessories, try a dark-coloured paper or paint. Similarly if you have alot of dark fixtures, try a light shade for the cabinets," says Tareq. You can also play around with textures. If you aren't ready for a complete cabinet makeover just yet, modify the knobs and handles. "Swap old knobs and handles for coloured, textured or patterned ones, or add a coat of paint or spray to existing handles and knobs to give it a lacquered finish," says Kirk.

Green touch

There's nothing better than having your own herb garden in the kitchen. Place a few herb pots near a window sill or on the kitchen counter, not too far away from the stove, and snip off what you need while cooking. If natural plants aren't an option, you can also try artificial plants. To give the kitchen an exotic feel, artificial creepers on a ceiling trellis placed over a kitchen island are an interesting option.



Fridge façade

The exterior of the fridge is often overlooked, but it shouldn't be, as it's a great space to personalise as well. "Stick fridge magnets with hooks or clips to keep appointment sheets or meeting reminders on it," says Kirk. You could also turn your fridge into a mini photo gallery or place a weekly menu plan and grocery lists on it.

Stylish floors

Rugs and floor mats are not usually considered for a kitchen, but they can easily add colour, texture and warmth. "Whether you need a non-slip kitchen mat to place near the sink area or decorative accent rugs as a transition into the dining area, choose one that matches the colour scheme, and always make sure its corners don't turn up and become a tripping hazard," says Kirk. GF

Photographs: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

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✳ Gastro adventures around the world, **P74** ✳ Explore wine country in Australia, **P78** ✳ North Norfolk is emerging as a British culinary hotspot, **P80** ✳ An island adventure is just a short hop away in the UAE, **P84**

PLUS! ✳ Check out the Tapas restaurants that are trending now, **P66** ✳ Tom Kitchin talks shop, **P70** ✳ Doha dining updates, **P86**

3's a trend: TAPAS

We take a look at some of the most interesting foodie trends in town.

One of the most celebrated and popular cuisines in the world, Spanish food has been grossly under-represented in Dubai for far too long. But not anymore! We are suddenly seeing a spurt in tapas bars and restaurants recreating authentic Spanish cuisine – in particular, tapas or small dishes meant for sharing, that is arguably one of their greatest gifts to global gastronomy. And we couldn't be happier. Joining Seville's and Al Hambra that have long held the fort for Spanish food here, are three new openings that don't just offer Spanish cuisine, but specialise in the tapas concept. Are they all bringing an assembly-line Spanish experience to the table, or is each one of them standing out for itself as a unique dining destination? You decide!

El Sur, Westin Dubai Mena Seyahi Beach Resort & Marina



Billed as a contemporary Spanish restaurant, El Sur is indeed contemporary in every sense – from the arty hand-drawn style wall art complemented by dramatic Matador-inspired paintings, to the minimalist retro-modern décor, complete with 70s-style chairs. Enjoy the trendy lounge vibe indoors, or for a more relaxed meal, step onto the terrace which overlooks the beach. Not just a tapas joint – although they do offer a delicious selection though, divided under Contemporary and Classic – the menu offers the usual suspects of Spanish cuisine. Manned by a mostly-Spanish team in the kitchen as well as on the service front, the flavours stay true to the cuisine. The staff are happy to recommend, and if I were you, I'd listen to them – the mixed croquetas; broken eggs with chorizo (a crushed boiled egg concoction); marinated chicken skewers; and potato and beet chips were all excellent renditions of Spanish tapas, and wouldn't be out of place in a little eatery in San Sebastian. Mains include a variety of fish and seafood options, naturally, but also some interesting pork and meat dishes, but we'd be happy filling up on drinks and sharing tapas. At the dessert stage is where the culinary creativity really comes to life – think caramelised brioche with lemon ice cream, or the traditional vanilla Catalana cream updated with a mandarin sorbet. Simply delish! *Call 04-3997070.*



Casa de Tapas, Dubai Creek Golf & Yacht Club

With its rustic-style décor, complete with an inverted lemon tree that drops down from the ceiling in the centre of the restaurant, and hand painted ceramic plates, this restaurant manages to instantly transport you to Catalonia. Towards one end, you can watch football games in private booths with comfy sofa-style seating – each booth has its own screen – whereas in the dining room area, you can take a seat at the bar, on a high bar-style table, or enjoy a relaxed meal in a space that boasts vibrant Spanish illustrations, dark wooden dining tables and floor to ceiling windows with views of the Creek. A live band performs on Wednesdays, but you can enjoy Gypsy King melodies on other nights. The menu is brimming with Spanish tapas items including a cheese-filled Spanish omelette, fried eggplant with date syrup – which tastes similar to the Arabic sweet lugaimat – and gooey crusted mushroom risotto balls, which are excellent washed down with a glass of refreshing Sangria. A must-try is the angel hair pasta with shrimp and squid ink served in the pan. You can also choose a tender and moist nine-hour slow cooked lamb shoulder with grilled vegetables for mains. Look no further than cinnamon-and sugar-coated churros and small rice pudding croquettes with a milky foam for desserts, that are absolutely authentic. *Call 04-4161800.*



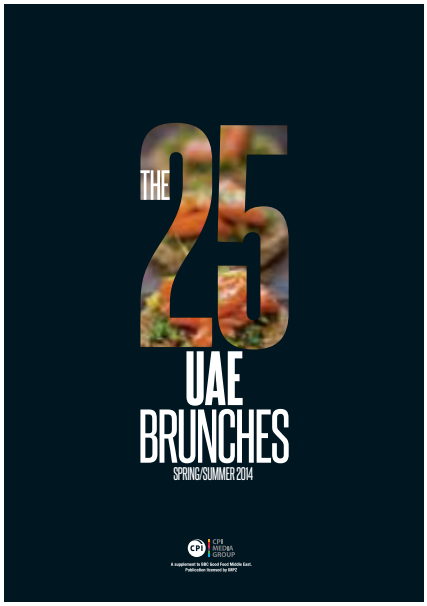
Salero Tapas & Bodega, Kempinski Mall of the Emirates

Opened to much fanfare late last year (they even had a pre-opening preview for *BBC Good Food ME* Food Club members), this restaurant has livened up the dining offerings of Kempinski MoE no end. Aiming to bring a slice of Spain into Dubai, the restaurant is dominated by an island-style open kitchen in the middle – with bar seating along it, typical of any self-respecting tapas joint in Spain – over which Spanish chef Alvaro Roa rules. Oversized wicker basket-shaped chandeliers, original Spanish art, and a mezzanine floor with wall-to-wall wine displays complete the authentic setting. The menu is refreshingly small and well-priced, with a range of hot and cold tapas items, cold cuts, a few specials and paella – there's not a traditional main course in sight. We recommend the Canarian wrinkle potatoes – a specialty of the Spanish Canary islands – chicken and cheese croquettes, the cured beef ham served directly from a display meat-slicer (pork, such as Iberian ham is also available), and most definitely the Paella. Paella is quite easy to get wrong, but when done well, as it is here – cooked in the purely traditional way – it is beautifully subtle and flavourful at the same time. But be warned, it's also served in the traditional portion size, which is huge. Dessert offerings continue the authentic streak with Crema Catalana and churros making an appearance, but you may just want to savour the sangria – served in pitchers, naturally – instead! Flamenco performances on Monday and Wednesday nights complete the mix. *Call 04-4095888.*

Reviews by SUDESHNA GHOSH, NICOLA MONTEATH | Photographs SUPPLIED

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Do we need more than 5-a-day?

One of the most positive and consistent health messages we hear is to eat at least five portions of fruit and veg a day – yet most of us don't. Nutritional therapist Kerry Torrens suggests ways to reach your target, and explains why we should aim even higher.

Eating a variety of fruit and veg is one of the surest ways to get the vitamins, minerals, fibre and plant chemicals that help to lower our risk of disease. On top of this, people who eat four or more servings a day (a total of 350g) are reported to score higher in aptitude tests and feel generally happier.

Yet some of us find it a challenge to reach the 5-a-day target and are confused about what 'counts'. If you feel the same, our chart opposite will help.

Is five portions enough?

Standard international health guidelines usually advise eating at least five daily portions of fruit and veg (based on WHO recommendations to consume at least 400g of fruit and vegetables daily), but some experts argue that's simply not enough. Certain countries have higher targets – in Japan, 13 portions of veg and 4 of fruit is the daily goal. In reality, 5-a-day represents the minimum required for good health, and it's best to aim for 7-9 portions a day. (A portion for adults is 80g of fresh fruit and veg, and 30g of dried fruit.)

Another consideration, particularly in this part of the world, is that the fruit and veg on offer may be less nutritious than it once was. This is due to intensive farming methods, changes in soil conditions, new crop varieties (which yield larger produce that needs less time to ripen on the plant), increased transport distances, storage times and our tendency to eat out of season.

What are the benefits?

We have plenty of produce to choose from these days. Whether it's bananas, which is rich in potassium and fibre, to vegetables such as cabbage, cauliflower, broccoli, onions, garlic, tomatoes, carrots and green leafy veg, which provide more valuable plant chemicals, like carotenoids (which are thought to give us the most protection), the rewards are many. Here are some key health benefits you can enjoy with increased intake of fruit and veg:

- **Boost your bone health** with broccoli and dark-green leafy veg like kale, which are valuable sources of calcium.
- **Beat high blood pressure** with celery, tomatoes and spinach – all potassium rich.
- **De-stress** by eating avocado, which is rich in vitamin B.
- **Cut colds** with vitamin C: top sources are kiwi, strawberries, citrus fruit and peppers.
- **Fight hunger** with low-cal, high-fibre fruit and veg; they keep you fuller for longer.

Best eaten together

- **Avocado and tomatoes** Heart-healthy fats in avocado help you absorb protective plant nutrients, like lycopene in tomatoes.
- **Spinach and citrus** You'll absorb the iron in spinach more easily if you combine it with vitamin-C-rich fruit or veg, such as lemon, orange or peppers.
- **Green leafy veg and chickpeas** Leafy greens are rich in magnesium, needed for energy and heart health. Not so keen on greens? Combine just a small amount with beans or pulses – they supply vitamin B6, which ups your magnesium intake.
- **Broad beans and parsley** Beans are a good source of catechins, plant compounds thought to protect against heart disease and cancer. The vitamin C in parsley helps our bodies to absorb catechins more easily.

Raw, cooked or peeled – what's best? Some fruit and veg is best eaten raw – but with other produce, our bodies absorb more of certain nutrients after light cooking. However, fruit and veg always offers important benefits like fibre, no matter how you choose to eat it.

FRUIT & VEG	KEY NUTRITIONAL BENEFIT	HOW TO COOK AND EAT
Carrots	Betacarotene – essential for healthy skin and good eye health.	Cooking them helps us access betacarotene. (Raw carrots still have some, plus potassium and fibre.)
Tomatoes	Lycopene – heart healthy; helps to protect our cells from damage such as cancer.	Slow-roast or pan-cook in a little oil.
Garlic	Allicin – helps to support your circulatory system; helps to manage cholesterol levels.	Raw is best! Or chop or crush 10 minutes before use and add at the end of cooking.
Broccoli/ cauliflower	Glucosinolates – potent compounds that help to protect us against cancer.	Raw, as their activity is reduced on heating; but light steaming helps us to access protective carotenoids.
Apples/ pears	Pectin – a soluble fibre that helps to manage cholesterol.	Just as good raw or cooked – but keep the skin on, as most nutrients are found just beneath it.

WHAT COUNTS AND WHY

Canned, frozen, dried and fresh fruit and veg all count
All contribute vitamins, minerals and fibre. A variety is best, so aim for a rainbow of colours.

Beans and pulses count as one portion, regardless of how much you eat
They're a great source of fibre, but beans and pulses lack the mix of vitamins and minerals that fruit and veg give us.

A 150ml glass of 100% unsweetened juice counts as one portion, even if you drink more
Juice contributes vitamins, but none of the valuable fibre found in the whole fruit or vegetable. Fruit juice is also high in natural sugars.

A smoothie may count as a maximum of two portions
However, it must include the whole edible pulp from one fruit or vegetable (80g) combined with 150ml juice of another, or the equivalent edible pulp.

Fruit and vegetables in convenience foods do count
But beware – these products may be high in fat, salt and sugar, so check the label.

Potatoes, whether baked, mashed or as chips, *don't* count
Potatoes are considered a starchy food in our diet, along with pasta, rice or bread.

Photographs ADRIAN TAYLOR, JEAN CAZALS/OLIVE, STEPHEN MARWOOD/GARDENERS' WORLD, ALAMY, SHUTTERSTOCK, THINKSTOCK

HIT YOUR DAILY TARGET

Your handy cut-out-and-keep guide to portion sizes – each square represents one portion.

 5 fresh **asparagus spears**	 ½ **avocado**	 1 medium **banana** or apple	 3 heaped tablespoons **beans**, including soya, pinto and baked beans	 7 slices, or 3 whole baby **beetroot**
 2 **broccoli** florets	 8 **Brussels sprouts**	 1/6 small **cabbage**	 8 **cauliflower** florets	 2 **clementines**
 ½ large **courgette**	 5cm slice **cucumber**	 4 heaped tablespoons **curly kale**	 3 whole **dried apricots** or dates	 14 **grapes**
 1 medium glass of pure unsweetened fruit or veg **juice**	 1 **leek** or 1 medium onion	 3 heaped tablespoons red, green or brown **lentils**	 5cm slice of **melon**	 14 button **mushrooms**
 3 heaped tablespoons of fresh or frozen **peas**	 2 halves or 7 slices of canned **peaches**	 2 rings or 12 chunks of canned **pineapple**	 2 medium **plums**	 2 whole **plum tomatoes** from a can
 1 cereal bowl of **spinach**, lettuce or watercress	 7 fresh **strawberries**	 6 baby **sweetcorn**	 1 large **sweet potato**	 1 heaped tablespoon of **tomato purée**

Kitchin confidential

Tom Kitchin talks Nicola Monteath through his hard-working life at Michelin-starred restaurant kitchens.



Most chefs consider their restaurant kitchens their home, and Tom Kitchin is no different. On a recent trip, the Michelin-star chef flew in to Dubai on a Saturday - as his restaurant in Edinburgh, The Kitchin, is closed on Sunday and Monday – and was so keen on getting back into his kitchen the minute it opened for service, that he made sure he flew back on Monday evening. Now, that's dedication!

The curly haired Scottish chef was born in Edinburgh, but grew up in Perthshire, Scotland, and is one of those people whose childhood passions of being a chef didn't only survive, but thrived. He loved the kitchen and its bustling atmosphere ever since he first stepped into one. "I began by washing pots and pans at 15, and then moved on to helping with starters and cooking at a local pub for pocket money over the weekends," he says. Tom's enthusiasm for the kitchen life saw him dropping out of school at the age of 16 to follow his dream. With no qualifications in hand, and just a year of basic cookery training from Perth College UHI in Scotland, he jumped into his first full-time apprenticeship at The Gleaneagles Hotel in Perthshire, and later moved to London to work with three-Michelin starred chef Pierre Koffmann, who is now his mentor. "I worked with Pierre at his three-star Michelin restaurant, La Tante Claire, at the age of 18. London is so big, and when I worked there I was under a lot of pressure as I wanted to gain his trust. I was learning from a master," he says. Tom describes his experience in London as a battle, but one which made him stronger. After gaining five years of hands-on experience in London, Pierre sent Tom to Paris to work with another three-Michelin starred chef, Guy Savoy.

Cooking with the stars

Tom was a young Scotsman with no French linguistic skills at that point, but all he knew was he had to prove himself. "I had learnt dedication from Koffmann, and it was vital for me to gain respect from a chef like Guy Savoy as well," he says. A true example of how hard work can pay off, Tom was always the first to get into the kitchen, and the last to go out, and his experience with Guy Savoy saw him picking up French cooking techniques that he uses till today, at his restaurant. After two years, at the age of 25, Tom joined world renowned masterchef Alain Ducasse at three Michelin-star restaurant, Le Louis XV in Monte Carlo. It was here that Tom went back to basics and experienced cooking like never before. "Sometimes you have to go one step backwards to go two steps forward. When working with Ducasse, I had to learn cooking all over again. I picked up new techniques and it was a completely different environment from anywhere else I worked before," he says.

Tom credits the foundation of his cooking skills to his mentors, but also feels that they helped him define his own cooking style as well. He gave up the kitchen life to work as a chef on a private yacht, owned by British business magnates, the Bamfords, in 2004, and this is where he

was brought back to the simplicity of cooking good food with what was available to him. "We sailed from the South of France to Italy, and I would stop by the markets to pick up fresh produce. It was a life-changing experience for me as I was away from the fine-dining kitchens and working for a family of real foodies," he says.

His newfound love for local produce influenced him and his Swedish wife Michaela, whom he met while working in London – who has a degree in Hotel Management and has worked at Savoy London, as well as Burj Al Arab – to finally combine their skills, and return to Edinburgh to open The Kitchin together in 2006. Opening the restaurant wasn't easy though, and Tom and his wife went through several hardships initially. "We had to take a loan from the bank, borrow from family members and scrape to make ends meet," he says. When asked about putting his family name on the door, Tom tells me, with a name like his, it was only natural to do so.

The Kitchin is based in an old port area (Leith) which used to be dodgy, but is now very hip. "At first, the only people who visited the restaurant were my friends and family, but within six months it became crazy busy and we weren't expecting it. We started with only 30 bottles of wine and now offer 300!" he says. A real family venture, the restaurant also has Tom's father managing the business aspect.

"Sometimes you have to go one step backwards to go two steps forward. When working with Ducasse, I had to learn cooking all over again."

Scottish dishes with a French flair can be found on the menu, and it's all made from local, seasonal produce. "It's important to work with the seasons, and eat root vegetables and game in winter, or red fruits in summer. I always like to buy the best available and want to know who sells it," he says. The Kitchin was awarded a Michelin star in 2007, just one year after it opened, making Tom the youngest Scottish chef to receive the star – he was 29.

Over the last few years, Tom has helped revolutionise Edinburgh's gastronomic scene, to the extent where he received an Honorary doctorate of Arts degree from Edinburgh Napier University for his contribution to Scottish Food Culture. "I was extremely honoured when I received the award, because I was just doing what I love. Scottish produce is phenomenal, thanks to the mountains and the sea. For example, the big tides allow scallops to be sold in abundance, and we get great lobster and langoustine fresh of the boat as well," he says. A champion of Scottish produce, Tom loves stirring up a conversation about locally sourced produce with diners, and makes sure they are all handed a map of Scotland, where the ingredients used in dishes are marked according to where they are sourced from.

Life outside the kitchen

Tom's love for seasonal cooking is so profound that he released a cookbook, *From Nature to Plate: Seasonal Recipes* (Phoenix) which includes a selection of restaurant-style, easy-to-cook recipes for every season. "In Scotland, like most countries, you see children having fried food or fizzy drinks and it's horrible," he says. Tom is the father of four boys, all under the age of seven, and he makes sure they eat healthy, balanced meals. Something of a Jamie Oliver for Scotland, he also visits schools occasionally to educate children on the importance of eating healthy. *Kitchin suppers* (Quadrille Publishing Ltd), Tom's second book, features a range of recipes perfect for home cooks who want to make a nice meal for the family. "The book has recipes my mom used to make, like chicken and broccoli bake, and other easy dishes with a Swedish touch courtesy of my wife, like smoked salmon lasagne," he says.

When Tom does manage to get out the kitchen, it's mostly to appear on television for MasterChef UK and BBC's Saturday Kitchen. "I love working on television, because these shows are not scripted and I get to be a bit cheeky," he says. Tom has also worked onscreen with celebrity chefs Theo Randall and Michel Roux Jr. The TV show, The Chef Protégé, saw Tom going back to his alumnus Perth College to train and mentor seven protégés, who then competed against the other chefs' protégés, to cook for the chefs' mentors in the finale; Tom's mentor was Pierre Koffmann. "My protégé won the competition and made me very proud," says Tom.

Over the weekends, Tom loves hanging out at The Scran and Scallie, his second venture in partnership with Michelin-star chef Dominic Jack, which is more of a family-friendly pub where guests can find traditional British favourites like fish and chips. Other than that, he loves nothing more than spending quality time with his wife and children over a Sunday roast! Take inspiration from Tom and make these delicious dishes from his cookbook, *Kitchin Suppers*, which symbolise modern Scottish cuisine.

SIGNATURE RECIPES



Smoked salmon, pea and red onion frittata

SERVES 4 ● PREP 5MINS ● COOK 20MINS

150g smoked salmon
2 red onions, peeled
1 courgette
½ large red pepper, cored and deseeded
100g freshly podded peas or broad beans
8 large free-range eggs
Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper
1 tbsp dill, chopped
100g cheddar, finely grated
Olive oil for cooking
Snipped chives, to finish

1 Heat the oven to 160C. Cut the smoked salmon into strips and dice the red onions, courgette and red peppers.
2 Add the peas or broad beans to a pan of boiling salted water and blanch for a couple of mins, then strain and refresh in cold water; drain and pat dry.
3 Beat the eggs with a fork until lightly foamy. Season and add the peas or broad beans, dill, smoked salmon and grated cheese.
4 Heat a little olive oil in a non-stick (or well-seasoned) ovenproof frying pan, about 23cm in diameter, over a medium heat. Add the onions and cook gently for 2–3 mins to soften slightly. Add the courgettes and red peppers and cook for 2–3 mins. Pour the egg mixture over the vegetables and cook over a low heat for 3–4 mins. Place in the oven and cook for 6–8 mins. Sprinkle chives over the frittata and cut into portions. Serve with a watercress salad. >>

Photographs SUPPLIED – COURTESY LAURA EDWARDS.



Scallops in the shell

SERVES 4 ● PREP 10MINS ● COOK 35MINS

8 scallops (with shells)
1 carrot, chopped
1 leek, sliced
½ celeriac, cut into thin strips
1 tsp vegetable oil
100g puff pastry
2 egg yolks
Seaweed or rock salt, to serve
FOR THE WHITE WINE SAUCE
1 tbsp olive oil
100g shallots, sliced
250ml French vermouth
250ml fish stock
250ml whipping cream
Salt and pepper
1 tbsp dill, chopped

1 Heat a heavy-bottomed pan and sweat the shallots for 3-4 mins in oil. Add the wine and fish stock and continue to cook until the mixture is reduced and has a syrupy consistency. Add the cream, bring back to the boil and reduce again slightly. Season with salt and pepper, then pass through a strainer or sieve. Add the chopped dill.

2 Prepare the scallops (see How to shuck a scallop). Rinse the scallop shells and pat them dry before setting aside. Then rinse the scallops, place on a paper towel and refrigerate.

3 Sweat the carrot, leek and celeriac in the oil over a low heat. Season and cook until they are soft but not browned. Allow to cool.

4 Take 4 of the washed scallop shells and divide the leeks and carrots between them. Cut the scallops in half through the middle, season and place 4 pieces on each shell. Cover with 3 tbsp of the white wine sauce and top with the remaining shells.

5 Preheat the oven to 200C. Roll out the puff pastry and cut into thin strips. Place a pastry strip around each scallop shell to seal the two together. Using your fingers, gently press the pastry in place to ensure that the seal is tight and there are no holes. Brush with egg yolk and cook in the oven for 8-10 mins, until the pastry is golden brown.

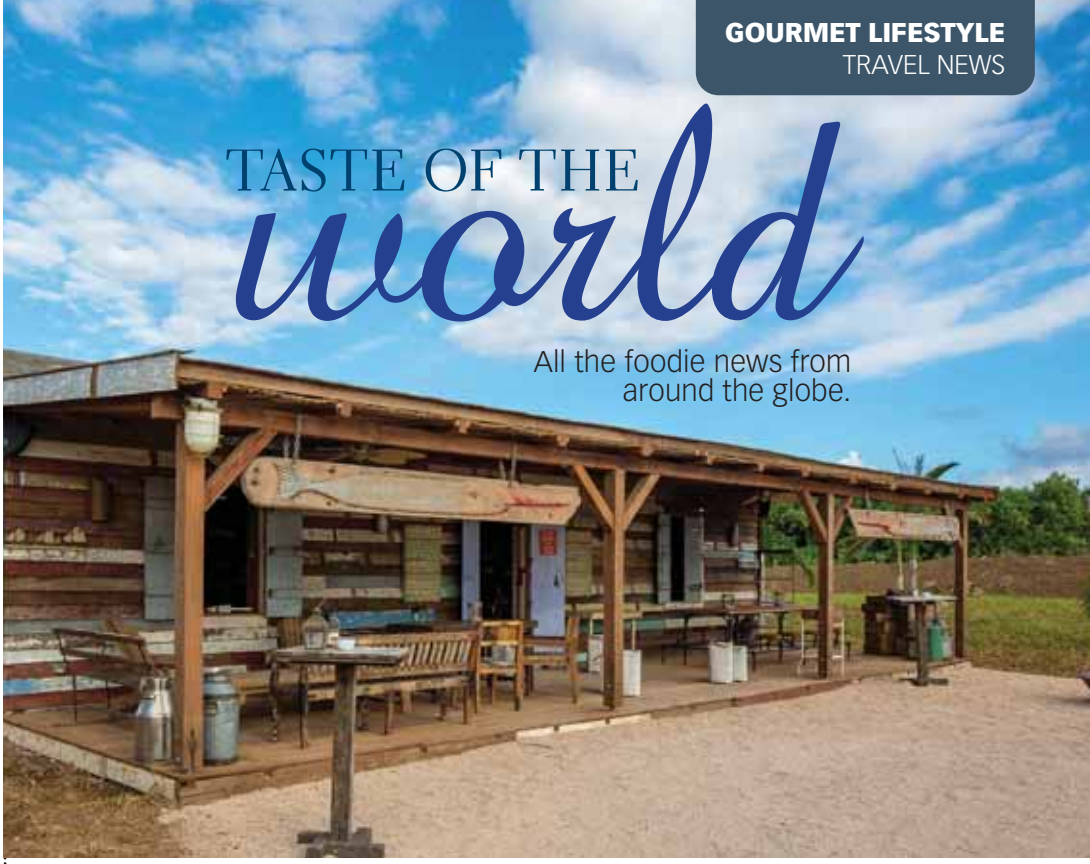
6 Remove the scallop shells from the oven and run a sharp knife all the way around the outer crust. Serve the shells on a bed of seaweed or rock salt mixed with a little water – to stop the shells from moving in a tray or platter.

HOW TO SHUCK A SCALLOP

Slip a thin sharp knife between the shells and cut through the large white muscle tab (the abductor muscle) to release one side of the shell. Pry open the shell and pull everything out. Using a spoon, neatly scoop out the meat. Separate the white meat from the outer skirt and roe (the skirt and the roe can be kept for making sauces and they freeze well).

TASTE OF THE world

All the foodie news from around the globe.





RUSSIAN RENDEZVOUS

Fancy mastering Russian cooking? Book in for the Culinary package at the Corinthia Hotel St Petersburg where you can not only enjoy a luxurious stay soaking up the rich culture of this historic city, but also learn about the intricacies of Russian gourmet specialties with executive chef Dennis Kondokov. The package is priced at US$360 (around Dhs1,320) and includes three nights' stay, transfers, breakfast, the cookery class and a private guided city tour covering iconic historical attractions. For more info, visit www.corinthia.com/stpetersburg.

BRIT-FEST!

Festival season is here, and over the next few months, Britain will see its foodies gather together to celebrate. This month sees the first of nine events that make up Foodies Festival, UK's largest culinary event, taking place in the parklands of Marble Hill near Richmond on May 24-26. Expect everything from dining with chefs at the Feasting tent, to shopping at the Chilli food market, BBQ demos and Chocolate and baking sessions with the experts. Our mouths are already watering, and these festivals run on different dates until August! Find out more on www.foodiesfestival.com, ticket prices start from £15 (around Dhs90).



Something fishy!

If you like to immerse yourself in the local culture when you travel, you'll love the newly opened Fish Shack at the luxe Shanti Maurice resort in Mauritius, a bar and restaurant that replicates the traditional social hubs of the island where locals gather for food and a drink and a chat. Recycled fishing boat planks, bicycle rims and oil drums are just some of the charming elements used in the rustic-chic décor, which authenticity is carried through into the menu which includes dishes like gateau piment, samosas or dholl-puri, made using ingredients sourced from local farmers and fishermen. Room rates at the boutique beachfront beach resort start from €780 (around Dhs3,980), www.shantimaurice.com.

Did you know?

The reason why airline food has got such a bad rap for tasting terrible isn't because the food is necessarily always bad – it's because the human sensation of taste diminishes thanks to cabin pressure and the dry air, which means that the same food would taste much better if you were eating it on terra firma! According to Mark Dunn, Assistant Vice President, Emirates Flight Catering, airline food is cooked taking this tastebud issue into account. His top tip? Food with more depth of flavours, such as Asian-style braised dishes and curries, are the ones that consistently taste better when flying.



Culinary kids

The Royal Monceau Raffles Paris hotel has introduced a new series of children's workshops, Le Petit Royal, to not only pamper their little guests, but also to encourage creativity in kids. The workshops, which are held during the Saturday brunch at the luxurious hotel, include cupcake-making, and pizza-making with their Michelin-starred Italian chef. Complimentary for hotel as well as brunch guests, www.leroyalmonceau.com/explore-hotel/kids-program.

Text SUDESHNA GHOSH | Photographs SUPPLIED

Adventures for the GOURMET GLOBE-TROTTER

Forget a boring old cooking class while on a beach vacation, the true foodie is now seeking out unusual culinary activities on their travels. Ujala Ali Khan curates a selection of the most unique gastronomic experiences around the planet that are worth getting on a plane for.



Culinary cruise

Where FRANCE

For Francophiles who can't make up their mind between cruising down the Rhone and dining in Paris, the Taste of France cruise is the answer. This ten-day cruise from tour company Tauck kicks off with a couple of days in Paris, starting with an arrival reception and dinner at Champs Élysées' celebrity hotspot Fouquet's. In Paris, you enjoy a chocolate demonstration, a pastry class at École Lenôtre, tastings at Julia Child's favourite food spots and the École de Cuisine, plus a visit to Alain Ducasse's new culinary school. After two days, the tour continues aboard the 118-passenger MS Swiss Emerald through the Rhône Valley. The seven-day sailing trip includes cooking demonstrations, market visits, and wine tastings, with some of the highlights being a visit to Lyon's world-famous covered food market Les Halles, classes at an award-winning culinary school in Valence, and dinner at culinary legend Paul Bocose's restaurant L'Abbaye de Collonges.

Need to know When: Cruise dates are May 4, June 26, and October 21; **Cost:** From US$4,990 (around Dhs18,325); www.tauck.com.



Street food and art

Where BERLIN, GERMANY

Berlin is Germany's unofficial kingdom of cool, and the artistic commune of Kreuzburg is the centre of it all. This walking tour combines food and street art into a feast for all the senses. Starting at 4pm, you go for a stroll through the typically funky Berlin 'Kiez' (neighborhood) and see the best pieces of street art, including both famous works and little known gems, while being regaled with highlights from Kreuzberg's wild past. Along the way, there are plenty of stops for snacks and drinks that include both typical Berlin fare (such as currywurst) and more international food to reflect the multicultural demographic of the city.

Need to know Duration: 3 hours; **Cost:** €55; www.urbanadventures.com.



Truck stop

Where VANCOUVER, CANADA

A real change from gourmet restaurants and chic cafés, this walking tour allows foodies to discover the culinary prowess of Vancouver's food trucks. In two hours, the guides steer you through some of the best street eats the city has to offer, including a hot dog topped with seaweed flakes, butter chicken and naan, smoked salmon, hoisin chicken wraps and grilled cheese. Rated five on five on TripAdvisor, this tour also includes a stopover at Vancouver's most popular street shopping district and the Vancouver Art Gallery.

Need to know Duration: 2 hours; **Cost:** CAD49 (Around Dhs160); www.foodietours.ca.

Photographs: SUPPLIED, SHUTTERSTOCK.COM



Truffle treats

Where TUSCANY AND UMBRIA, ITALY

Digging through the dirt in an Umbrian forest can unearth one of the most decadent culinary components in the world, the truffle. The humble origins of this ingredient belie its true worth – a single kilo of white truffles is valued at around $4,000 per kg. This truffle-hunting excursion takes you through pristine forests in the Italian countryside where you follow a local truffle hunter and his dog, and learn about the history of truffles, while watching them in action. Depending on the time of the year, the bounty consists of white or black truffles – both equally delicious and equally valuable. At the end of the hunt, there is a sumptuous lunch including truffle-based dishes. The excursion is punctuated with cooking classes under the tutelage of Italian chefs. Accommodation is at a 17th century farm that has been converted into a modern boutique hotel with an excellent restaurant.

Need to know Duration: 4 days; **Cost:** €724 (around Dhs3,670) per head; www.golearnto.com.



Mussel mania

Where BRITTANY, FRANCE

Sign up for a Mussel Harvesting and Bread Making course to make the most of Brittany, one of France's gastronomic hotspots, where seafood and baking count as culinary highlights. Local chef Christian shares the secrets of Breton cooking in the pretty village of Saint Caradec; staying at a charming family-run hotel, you learn how to make famous delicacies such as Moules Marinières and crêpes suzette. Not just that, the mussels used for cooking are harvested by you from the beach right next to the hotel! Your guide will teach you where to look for mussels, how to pick the best ones and how to pluck them. Also nearby is an old mill that was built in 1668, where you can learn how to make bread using traditional methods tried and tested by the local bakers for centuries.

Need to know When: May 1, June 5, July 3, 17,31, September 4 and October 16; **Duration:** 4 days; **Cost:** €286; www.golearnto.com.



Epicurean explorations

Where NEW ZEALAND

Pegged as an invitation to 'explore nature's greatest outdoor pantry', the Ultimate Dinner Party is a unique nine-day adventure offered by luxury travel specialists Exclusive Travel Group, and co-curated by celebrity chef, TV presenter and writer, Al Brown. While itineraries can be tailored, a typical trip would start off with a harbour cruise dinner in Auckland, with a chartered classic DC3 aircraft taking the group around the country for the different activities that ensue therafter. These range from the group being split up into teams to go on foraging trips using different means of transport, and then cooking off against each other to make the evening's meal, which is then enjoyed together at a secret location; to vineyard visits; and lunches in exotic locations including a glacial mountain and a yacht. The group will be guided by local personalities and experts along the way, including celebrity chefs who you can dive and fish with. With stunning scenery, and adventure activities such as kayaking also thrown in, this is one of the most unique and immersive culinary experiences for a foodie – if you can afford it!

Need to know When: Dates arranged on request; **Duration:** 9 days; **Cost** NZ$39,600 (Dhs124.600) per person, minimum 12-member group required; www.exclusivelynz.com. >>



Polar adventure

Where ICELAND

Featured on CNN, among other media, food writer and chef Jody Eddy's meticulously planned culinary tours of Iceland are a breathtaking mix of the majestic landscapes and the unique gastronomic heritage of this country. Eddy has spent years exploring the country, and now shares her expert insight with adventurers. Hikes to waterfalls and geothermal pools are interspersed with visits to local growers and producers of Icelandic specialties such as smoked arctic char, skyr (a tangy local yoghurt), sweet rye bread, reindeer Carpaccio and liqueurs made with rhubarb, birch and caraway. Celebrity chef Gunnar Karl Gislason (the man behind Dill, the restaurant in Reykjavik that put Icelandic cuisine on the global food map) also gives cooking demonstrations and hosts a dinner, as part of this tour.

Need to know When: August 16-23; **Duration:** 8 days; **Cost** Around US$4,500; www.icelandculinarytours.squarespace.com.



Gastro-journey

Where NAPA VALLEY, SAN FRANCISCO, USA

Railway enthusiasts who appreciate fine cuisine will revel in the Napa Valley Wine Train Culinary Experience. The eight-hour trip starts with a sparkling wine tasting at the Gloria Ferrer winery in Sonoma. Prior to embarking on the train, you enjoy a guided, behind-the-scenes kitchen tour of the Napa Valley Wine Train Culinary Arts Center, which is not open to the general public. Once aboard, guests enjoy a gourmet lunch or dinner as they travel through the rolling hills vineyards of the pretty little village of St Helena, taking in the breathtaking views at every turn. Conducted by the executive chef, the tour concludes at the train's onboard kitchen.

Need to know Duration: 8 hours; **Cost:** US$167; www.viator.com.



Meat mastery

Where TOULOUSE, FRANCE

Certainly not one for the faint hearted, but ideal for someone looking to seriously hone their skills, the Charcuterie & Butchery Course course, which covers preparation of meat products, such as bacon, terrines, and pâtés, as well as knife skills, jointing and sectioning a whole animal, will teach you to have control of your meat from nose to tail. The course takes place in a restored French farmhouse in the village of Gramont (50 minutes from Toulouse) surrounded by views of the idyllic Gascony countryside. French cooking lessons using the meat and prepared meat products are part of the course.

Need to know When: April to October; **Duration:** 4 days; **Cost:** €776; www.golearnto.com.



Food foraging

Where AROUND BRITAIN

A growing trend amongst serious foodies around the world, food foraging courses teach you how to find delicious and nutritious edibles in the wild. Foraging expert Robin Harford (creator of the UK's leading wild food site eatweeds.co.uk) shares his knowledge on how to identify edible wild plants, prepare, cook and preserve them, and do it all sustainably. Locations for the foraging trip are revealed to attendees upon arrival, and up to 20 edible plants are explored during each session, which may include coltsfoot, water mint, wild garlic, nettle, burdock root and more. Harford's courses take place all over Britain, including Devon, London, Oxfordshire, Scotland, and Sussex, and vary in cost and duration, depending on location and time of year.

Need to know When: February to June; **Duration:** 2-6 hours, depending on course; **Cost:** From GBP30 (Around Dhs185); www.foragingcourses.com.



A good (food) run

Where BORDEAUX, FRANCE

Wine and running generally don't mix, but trust the French to do it anyway! The decidedly unique annual Marathon du Médoc in the Bordeaux wine region of France is a charity event that sees runners weave their way through more than 30 chateaux in Medoc, stopping to drink copious amounts of wine en route, and sampling cheeses, escargot and foie gras from local producers. With the cheers of hundreds of spectators lined up along the beautiful French countryside, this themed event is always good for a laugh – this year's theme is The Countries of the World and their Carnivals.

Need to know When: September 13, 2014; **Duration:** 1 day; **Cost:** From €83; www.marathondumedoc.com.



Food safari

Where SOUTH AFRICA

Looking for a chance to eat and drink with and learn from one of South Africa's top chefs, while spotting and photographing wildlife on the side? This trip is the ultimate combination of culinary and wildlife delights, in which you get to experience diverse aspects of South Africa, from Cape Town to Johannesburg. The culinary trip staples of lavish lunches and dinners, cooking lessons, wine tastings are combined with two nights aboard the 'Pride of Africa' Rovos Rail – straight from the golden age of train travel – and a Big Five wildlife safari at a luxury eco-lodge in the Sabi Sand Game Reserve. Other highlights include wining and dining with a view at the award-winning five-star Twelve Apostles Hotel and Spa, a cooking safari in a family home, lunch at the home of Chef Bruce Robertson, and a multi-course African-inspired dinner.

Need to know Duration: 12 days; **Cost:** From US$9,985; www.africantravelinc.com.



Global gourmet

Where FROM NEW YORK TO STOCKHOLM

Got about a month or so, and over 30,000 dirhams to spare? Then take the 33-day New York to Stockholm cruise trip aboard the Crystal Symphony. The journey covers Boston and Maine in the US, to go on to cities in Canada, Iceland, Denmark, Norway, Germany, Finland, Russia, and Estonia, culminating in Stockholm. Apart from the days of sailing, where you can enjoy delicious food on board (included in the fare), you can opt for a wide selection of excursions, which have a distinct culinary bent. In New York, choose between a Bateaux evening dinner cruise in New York (US$329), or the Chelsea Food, Wine & Culture Walk (US$219). In Boston, enjoy the Flavors of Boston's North End – a guided walk of the city's 'Little Italy', capped with lunch at an award-winning restaurant (US$209). Other activities include enjoying a New England Lobster Bake in Maine (US$129), Tea at the Citadel in Halifax, Canada (US$69), and a 4x4 Adventure & Lobster Lunch in Reykjavík, Iceland (US$409).

Need to know When: June 1 - July 4, 2014; **Duration:** 33 days; **Cost:** From US$11,375; www.crystalcruises.com.



Cone connoisseurs

Where SORRENTO, ITALY

Affectionately known as 'BFG' by the locals, Chef Biagio Longo owns the B&B cookery school in Sorrento – a gorgeous seaside town set on the Bay of Naples, dotted with Renaissance palazzi and Romanesque churches. Apart from his popular Gelato making course, in which ice cream lovers can not only learn how to make the perfect gelato, but also get tips on how to start their own gelato business, Chef Biago also aids budding chefs in mastering the art of Italian classics in other courses. The school's focus is on simple Italian food using fresh, local produce, while accommodation is in the lovely Hotel Soluena near the cookery school.

Need to know Duration: 5 days; **Cost:** EUR438; www.golearnto.com GF

On a gastronomic hunt!

Sudeshna Ghosh goes on a food and wine trail in the exquisite Hunter Valley region of Australia.

Our hotel has its address listed as Halls Road, and as we near our destination, I key it into the GPS. Twenty minutes later, we find ourselves literally in the middle of a jungle with the road in front of us coming firmly to an end, while Mr Tom Tom (the GPS) insistently asks us to turn right ahead. The right turn he is referring to is not actually a road, even calling it a hiking trail might be a euphemism – it is a forgotten path of twisted vines and tree roots coiled together as if frozen in a moment of lively play. With the setting sun starting to cast dark shadows around us, I nervously say out loud, "Surely this isn't the right way!"

It wasn't – a quick back-track, and stopping-for-directions later, we find ourselves cruising into Cessnock, the tiny town that marks the start of Hunter Valley wine country. The correct Halls Road was, in fact, a short detour from a far more civilised highway that connects Cessnock with Pokolbin, the centre of the wine region. But such is the nature of Hunter Valley – sprawling and quiet – that, had the road permitted, our hotel could well have been tucked away in the midst of that forest. As it happened, the Peppers Convent felt almost as remote – in a good way – when we finally did arrive. The twinkling lights of the converted former monastery, now an exclusive luxury guesthouse, were however, far more welcoming and warm than those forbidding tree trunks.

Dating back to 1909, the house was originally a nuns' convent (hence the name), and was in fact, physically transported 600 kilometres to its current location, when being restored, to become the luxury hotel it is today. Part of the leading Peppers group of hotels, the convent is home to only 17 rooms, decorated in a classical country home style to keep the historic charm of the property intact. History is certainly preserved here in every sense, with creaky floorboards and baroque-style furnishings completing the authenticity, although all the mod cons you'd need are available. The oversized outdoor deck overlooks the Pepper Tree winery estate, the grounds of which are populated by thousands of cicadas who provide your morning wakeup call and evening lullabies with unfailing diligence.

A long heritage

The Hunter Valley is probably one of Australia's best known wine-producing regions, although it is isn't very large. Overlooked by the majestic Brokenback mountains, the valley enjoys a unique micro-climate that is almost Mediterranean in nature, with warm summers and moderate winters. This is what led to it being developed as a wine-producing region as early as the 1830s, although it was only about a century later that it acquired renown for fine wines. That reputation has stuck, with a few pioneering winemakers sticking to quality viticulture in spite of declining demand in the mid 20th century when cheaper wines were more popular due to the depression. The strategy paid off, as today, it is known as the home of artisanal, boutique wineries, with its signature Semillon grape being compared to the sort of stature Bordeaux and Champagne enjoy in wine circles.

But today, the Hunter, as it is colloquially referred to, is known not only for its artisanal wines, but also for its gastronomic offerings, as well as a thriving arts scene – the rolling green vine-clad hills provide a soothing setting that tempts many to trade busier city lives for a slightly more laidback existence surrounded by food, wine and cheese.

George Francisco, executive chef of Robert's restaurant is one such person who has made this swap. The award-winning Roberts circa 1876 is one of the Hunter Valley's top restaurants, with a



Photographs: SUPPLIED and by WRITER

reputation for championing local produce. Passionate about growing and sourcing local, Francisco has a fully-fledged organic vegetable garden in the backyard of the historic, painstakingly refurbished 19th century cottage the restaurant is set in, and he also harvests his own honey and cures his own bacon. He serves up modern Australian cuisine executed with French finesse, with the menu including everything from tempura ricotta filled zucchini flowers, to grilled aged rangers valley rib eye with garden salad and potato puree. Desserts include panna cotta and handmade chocolates, but my pick would be the seven-layer chocolate cake with rum sauce and coca nibs – an indulgence if there ever was one. There is no messing about in the food, with simple yet artful presentation, classic flavours and an emphasis on taste. The rustic-style setting, complete with wheelbarrows with vegetables spilling out, sitting room-style lounges doubling up as private dining areas out the front, and distressed wood walls, offset by the sophisticated food, makes this a must-visit that I was glad to have ticked off my list on the very first evening.

Another Hunter Valley culinary classic is the (aptly named) The Cellar restaurant. Run by husband-wife duo Andy (who is the chef) and Janet Wright, this award-winning restaurant is open and airy, with large glass windows and a lush indoor garden blurring the boundaries between alfresco and indoor dining. The seasonally changing menu here also celebrates local produce, with a Mediterranean influence in the cooking – whether it's the braised lamb pie with tzatziki, the pan-fried halloumi with Italian veg, or the tiramisu. What remains quintessentially Aussie however, are the fresh, delicious flavours, and hearty portions.

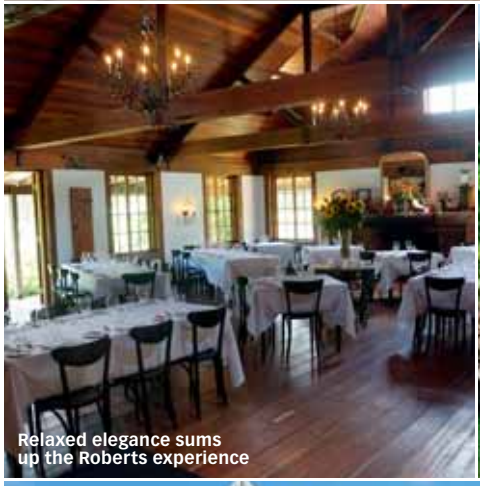
There are plenty of other fabulous restaurants around the valley, most of them housed in wine estates so that you can combine food and wine in a truly gastronomic experience. And with the increasing number of leading locavore chefs turning their attention to the region, you are more likely than not to stumble upon a delightful meal in some of them. Be warned however, being as it is a sleepy country destination, many of the restaurants close early (last orders usually at 9pm), so plan your days accordingly.

The cellar door is open!

With over 150 wineries dotted around the valley, it is easy enough to set off on your own if you're driving, and go on your own journey of discovery – most wineries have open cellar doors that you can pop into for a tasting. But, a smarter way to do it >>


Roberts circa 1876 restaurant is housed in a historic cottage


Hunter valley is also a haven for chocoholics


Relaxed elegance sums up the Roberts experience


Roberts restaurant sources a lot of its produce from its own back garden


Peppers Convent owes its name to its heritage of being a former nuns' residence


Cellar restaurant offers delicious food in an inviting setting


Expect country manor-style luxury at Peppers Convent



A wine tour is a great way of getting a taste of everything the valley has to offer



Stock up on gourmet souvenirs



Fresh, contemporary flavours at Emerson's restaurant

– especially if you're not planning on spitting out all the wines you taste! – is to book in for a wine tour. Divine Tours offer small-group personalised tours that combine a good mix of established, big-ticket wineries as well as newer, edgier ones who are eager to try new things when it comes to oenology.

Our full-day Gourmet Wine tour starts with a visit to Mountview Estate, where we have our first taste of the beautiful Semillon, and are also given an insight into wine production. Our next stop is the family-run Ernest Hill winery, a typical example of the friendly, welcoming nature of winemakers here, whose passion for what they do is manifest in their genuine eagerness for you to try and learn from them. After trying about five different grapes at each, lunch certainly seems like a good idea at this point – this is where the 'gourmet' bit of the tour kicks in. The award-winning Emerson's restaurant serves up fresh, light Mod Aus cuisine – think peppered squid with lemon aioli; zucchini fritters with cumin yoghurt; slow cooked lamb shoulder; and pan-fried snapper – in a bright, sunlight-flooded contemporary setting overlooking the Adina vineyards it is located within. Dinner at the restaurant is a slightly more sophisticated affair, with dishes like quail terrine and sous vide duck making an appearance on the menu.

Washed down with some more wine – if you can stomach it – the tour then sets off to two more wineries, including Tulloch, one of the oldest wine estates in the region, and Gundog estate, an exciting boutique winery specialising in regionally distinct single-estate wines. The tour also takes in a visit to the Smelly Cheese shop, a Hunter Valley institution offering not only a dazzling array of specialty cheeses – not all necessarily smelly! – but also a variety of other foodie goodies, and. But they do save the best for last, which is, a stop at the Hunter Valley Chocolate Co., located next to, what else, but another winery, Petersons Champagne House. The chocolate shop is what Willy Wonka's showroom would have looked like in real life, with everything from chocolate bars, truffles and fudge, to quirky concoctions such as chilli chocolate on offer. After a delicious day of eating, drinking and food shopping (naturally we didn't walk away from the cheese or the chocolate shop empty-handed!), we were deposited back to our hotel – I couldn't think of a better way to discover the delights of the valley.

TRAVEL DIARY

Hunter Valley is just a two-hour drive from Sydney and makes for a delightful two- or three-day break, combined with Australia's other attractions nearby. Sydney is an ideal gateway to the country, and has plenty of attractions for foodies, while Melbourne is the other cultural and culinary epicentre of Australia, with some of the country's best known chefs hailing from this vibrant, café-rich city. From Melbourne, the closest airport, Newcastle is a 90-minute flight away, from where Hunter Valley is about an hour by road.

GETTING THERE As the enormous A380 gently and almost imperceptibly edges itself out of its parking bay, you just know that if you are in for 14-hours or so of flying, you'd best be doing it in an aircraft like this. And if it's in a Qantas-liveried aircraft, with its premium flat-bed seats in business class (with a Kate Spade kit bag, no less!), generously appointed Premium Economy cabin, and private self-service bar on the upper deck, then you know you're going to enjoy the ride. Business class passengers can enjoy truly gourmet meals in a menu designed by Australian celebrity chef Neil Perry. Forget anything you might have expected of plane food – seasonally-inspired dishes such as lentil soup with thyme cream; mushroom ragout with baked polenta; and seared sea bass with vegetable tagine and almond couscous are just some tasty examples from the extensive menu offerings which wouldn't be out of place in a fine dining restaurant. The fine wines, china service and attentive staff complete the on-board experience. On ground, the Qantas Business and First lounges in Sydney and Melbourne airports are something of a treat in themselves, with the Neil Perry influence continuing into the gourmet offerings, which celebrate the best of Australian cuisine.
Qantas offers direct daily flights from Dubai to Sydney and Melbourne, tickets start from around Dhs5,200 (economy class) and around Dhs9,500 (business class), visit Qantas.com.

STAYING THERE
Room rates at the Peppers Convent start from around AUD345 per night (around Dhs1,200), visit peppers.com.au.

ADDRESS BOOK
Divine Tours: www.divinetours.com.au; Gourmet tours cost AUD$135 per person.
Robert's circa 1876: www.robertscirca1876.com.
Emersons Café & Restaurant: www.emersonsrestaurant.com.au.
The Cellar restaurant: www.the-cellar-restaurant.com.au.





WIN!

A beach-side getaway at **Oceanic Khorfakkan Resort and Spa**, worth **Dhs10,000**

One lucky winner can get a two-night stay in a two-bedroom villa, plus foodie and spa treats.

Head to the East Coast of the UAE for a weekend break at the Oceanic Khorfakkan Resort and Spa, nestled in the coastal town, Khorfakkan. The resort has a secluded beach and offers a cluster of newly launched villas, guestrooms and suites, as well as facilities such as an outdoor swimming pool, water sports and dive centre, 360 Spa and fitness centre with steam rooms and a sauna, tennis courts, and a children's pool.

When it comes to dining, the resort has something to suit all tastebuds. Lobby restaurant Café Oceanic and Al Diwan Tea Lounge are both ideal for afternoon tea, pastries and fresh juices, while the pool bar, Amwaj, is great for light snacks by the poolside. For a more substantial meal, visit the all-day dining eatery, Al Murjan, which serves everything from antipasti to freshly-made pizzas, or Bab Al Bahar, an open-air seafood restaurant.

One winner and their partner can enjoy a two-night stay in a two-bedroom villa, on a half board basis (breakfast and one meal), plus a 60 minute rejuvenating spa treatment for two.

Log on bbcgoodfoodme.com to enter this competition and simply answer this question:

Which emirate is Oceanic Khorfakkan Resort and Spa resort located in?

Scan this QR code to go straight to our website.

*Terms & conditions apply. Employees of CPI Media Group are not eligible to enter. Winners will be selected on random basis from correct entries.

Discover North Norfolk

This East Anglian region is one of Britain's best kept secrets as a foodie destination, says Henrietta Greene.



Blakeney is part of the Norfolk heritage coast

Stand aside Ludlow, Padstow or even Bridport – the North Norfolk coast is where it's at. Long known for its glorious beaches, birdwatching, seal trips, marshes and brisk winter winds, it is fast becoming the area to eat, shop and generally enjoy food. What is also so impressive about this area is what the French call 'terroir' – the connections that are established and maintained between the land (and sea) and what is served or sold.

Every true food-spot has to have a smattering of Michelin stars, so here I offer up two. The Neptune, a charming, simply styled restaurant, which also offers rooms and breakfast, has a thoughtful, enticing menu that includes Poached Thornham oysters and Sedgeford leg of lamb, lamb sweetbreads, broad beans & potato purée horseradish cream. What's more, it is fairly priced.

Morston Hall, also boasting a star, is on a far more lavish scale. Galton Blackiston, the chef/patron, and his wife, Tracy, are warm and welcoming, the rooms luxurious and the food considered and confident. A real treat is to cram in the kitchen for one of Galton's half-day cookery courses.

But any hotspot must also offer a range of styles and prices for eating out, and this coastline has them in abundance. Wiveton Farm Café (and adjacent shop) is a gem. Decorated with shellscapes, tables spill around under the trees – it is the perfect cabin in the fields. Serving local, seasonal food (most of the produce is own-grown) cooked in a loose, eclectic style, it is the place to hang out. The view over the marshes is fabulous and when the sun is shining I can't imagine anywhere else I'd rather be.

Other favourites include The Wiveton Bell for Cromer crab cakes and battered haddock using Yeatmans, a local beer. The Orange Tree is a suitably relaxed pub with rooms which has a similar approach to its food, and the summertime barbecue in the courtyard at The Victoria packs



North Norfolk boasts a beautiful coastline



Plenty of beautiful produce on offer in this region

them in – with good reason.

If you want to buy produce for a picnic or to cook in, there's plenty to inspire, particularly fish. As well as Gurney, a brilliant fishmonger in Burnham Market, the coast road is littered with fishmongers, fish shacks or mobile vans, usually family-run, selling crabs, lobsters, local cockles plus the catch of the day. Look out for The Blakeney Crab Shed and The Fish Shed.

As for farm shops and delis, possibly the newest kid on the block is Walsingham Farm Shop, but its growing reputation is more than justified. There's local meat at the in-house butchery and great locally made cakes, jams and juices. The well-established Humble Pie, probably the first-ever deli on the coast, remains as fresh and determined to get the best as ever. Also impressive are The Wells Deli and Picnic Fayre, which is famous for its Norfolk lavender bread.

Drove Orchards bottles and sells about 12 different varieties of juice from its own-grown apples, and The Real Ale Shop at Branthill Farm offers well over 50 different bottle beers made by Norfolk brewers – the unique selling point here is that they all use barley grown on the farm.

Finally I must mention Jules Jackson at De-lish. In his tiny shop at Wells-next-the-Sea, he fusses over, cures and teases out the most extraordinary collection of cured meat, hams, salamis and sausages. Certainly a man to watch, but just one of the many whose dedication and passion contribute to Britain's latest, worthy food-spot. BF

TRAVEL DIARY

GETTING THERE

All leading airlines, including British Airways, offer direct flights to London, from where Norwich is about a three hour drive.

ADDRESS BOOK

EATING OUT

- The Neptune Inn & Restaurant Old Hunstanton, theneptune.co.uk
- Morston Hall Morston, morstonhall.com
- Wiveton Farm Café Wiveton, wivetonhall.co.uk

GREAT PUBS WITH ROOMS

- The Wiveton Bell Wiveton, wivetonbell.co.uk
- The Victoria Holkham, holkham.co.uk/victoria
- The Orange Tree Thornham, theorangetreethornham.co.uk

FRESH FISH TO GO

- The Blakeney Crab Shed Blakeney, 01263 740988
- The Fish Shed Brancaster Staithe, fishshed.co.uk
- Gurneys Burnham Market, gurneysfishshop.co.uk

FROM THE FARM

- Walsingham Farm Shop Walsingham, walsinghamfarmsshop.co.uk
- The Real Ale Shop Wells-next-the-Sea, therealaleshop.co.uk/norfolk
- Drove Orchards Thornham, droveorchards.com

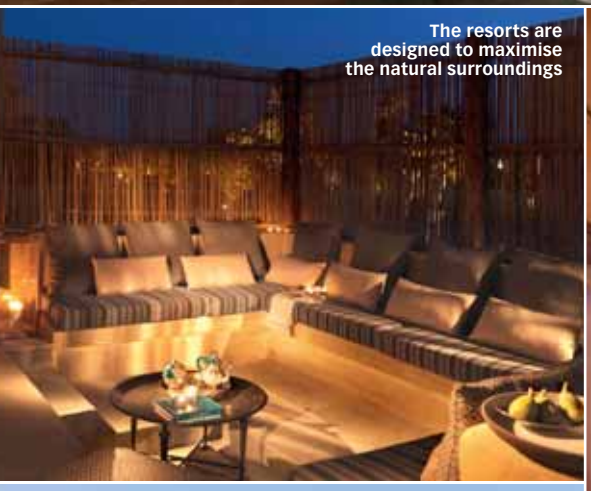
DELIGHTFUL DELIS

- Picnic Fayre Deli Cley-next-to-the-Sea, picnic-fayre.co.uk
- Humble Pie Burnham Market, humble-pie.com
- The Wells Deli Wells-next-the-Sea, wellsdeli.co.uk
- De-lish Wells-next-the-Sea, 01328 711914



Plan a summer stay-cation

Whether you're looking for beach bliss, or a back-to-nature experience, accompanied by gastronomic delights, you can enjoy the best of all worlds without burning into your vacation time, right here in the UAE at Sir Bani Yas island! By Sudeshna Ghosh.



The resorts are designed to maximise the natural surroundings



Al Yamm villas epitomise rustic, natural luxury



Al Sahel villas are set in the midst of the wildlife park

Want to combine the picture-perfect beaches of the Maldives with the adventures of an African safari, and the spa pampering of Thailand? An island getaway filled with all of these unique attractions is just a short 45-minute flight (or a four-hour road trip) away! Sir Bani Yas island, a small island off the coast of Abu Dhabi near Jebel Dhanna, is steeped in history, with evidence of inhabitation dating back thousands of years – the island is home to pre-Islamic archeological ruins, and geological salt hills that are millions of years old. But, while that makes for an interesting back-story, you don't visit the island for its history – you go for a relaxed getaway in tranquil, natural surroundings in the midst of a 4,200 hectare private wildlife reserve.

Originally created by Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahyan, late ruler of the UAE, the island follows a conservational approach to the environment, with a respectful attitude to animals many of which roam free on the island – vehicles are only allowed to drive at a maximum speed of 50kmph and it is perfectly normal to have a gazelle or deer amble across the road en route – and an eco-friendly ethos in the building and operations of the resorts.

Dotted around the huge island are two luxury villa resorts as well as one larger hotel, all managed by the Anantara group, where you can enjoy creature comforts, while being surrounded by the wild creatures that populate Sir Bani Yas. Choose one that meets your holiday needs, or mix it up to make it a multi-destination break in one long weekend!

Photographs: SUPPLIED and by WRITER

STAY

The Anantara Al Yamm villas are a cluster of just 30 luxe villas – each with their own private doors and thatched fencing – located right on the beachfront of the 87-square kilometre island. With the turquoise blue sea and powder white sand beckoning on the one hand, and the lush mangrove lagoons on the other, the spacious accommodation is designed in a rustic style inspired by traditional fishing villages. Flooded with natural light, the interiors incorporate modern luxuries, with muted colours and natural materials, accented by subtle marine touches. Sit out on your private deck, or soak in your oversized bath – an infectious sense of peace pervades the whole place.

For those craving a bit more adventure, the newly opened Al Sahel villa complex recreates a little slice of Africa in the UAE, with its luxurious, safari-inspired décor (think earth tones, carved wood and leather furniture, beaded artefacts and tribal prints), surrounded by the savannah grassland of the wildlife park it is set in the heart of. Free-roaming gazelles (and the occasional peacock) often wander into the villa patio, only going to enhance the whole back-to-nature feel. Lounge areas in the main reception building, with bar service and an inviting library – complete with books and board games – tempt you to kick back and exhale, whatever you are in the midst of.

Villas in both properties range from one- to two-bedroom sizes, making them suitable for romantic escapes and family getaways alike.

DINE

At Al Yamm, the poolside Olio restaurant serves up Italian specialties for dinner accompanied by a beach view, as well as breakfast and light lunches. With the menu focusing on fresh, sustainable produce, including locally sourced non-endangered seafood, expect dishes ranging from the usual suspects such as bresaola and carpaccio and pastas, to delicious grilled seafood, ossobuco, and homemade pizzas (on the lunch menu).

Savannah Grill in Al Sahel continues on the African theme with gourmet offerings inspired by different regions of Africa created by Zimbabwean chef Gerald Kapesa, such as ravioli with biltong (South African cured meat); vegetable curry potje (stew); Moroccan-style salads; fine steaks; game dishes, including guinea fowl ballotine and venison carpaccio; and malva pudding (a baked apricot-flavoured dessert originating from Cape Town). Finish off a delicious meal at Savannah with a nightcap by the traditional African bonfire (Boma) to complete the safari-style experience. Breakfast and lunch, with lighter menu options, can be enjoyed alfresco on the restaurant terrace, overlooking the grassland.

And if alfresco dining is on the agenda, then why not opt for a personalised meal, as part of the Dine By Design experience? The chefs' team will put together a bespoke menu, which you can enjoy in a private spot of your choice, whether it's at the beach – in a special cabana with billowing white drapes and the sea just steps away – in the middle of the desert, or simply in the comfort of your own villa.

Other restaurant options available on the island include seafood at Samak, international dishes at The Palm, and relaxed tapas-style offerings at Amwaj, all of which are located in the main Desert Islands Resort & Spa building.

DO

Sir Bani Yas has a lot of unexpected attractions to offer. With an unbelievable variety of wildlife calling the island home, game drives are a must-do – proper safari-style open jeeps drive through the park to enable sightings of not just herds of gazelle, oryx and deer, but also cheetahs and giraffe (which were brought to the island when the wildlife park was first created) to culminate in a sunset viewing on a hill, with Arabian coffee and dates, and majlis-style seating.

Other high-octane activities include kayaking in the mangroves, horseback riding, and mountain biking, while the surrounding gulf provides the perfect opportunities for watersports such as snorkeling, sailing, scuba diving, and even traditional fishing and pearl diving, in a nod to the region's heritage, if one should fancy it. And if heritage interests you, then the island's 6th century Christian monastery site, a rare archeological spot of historical significance, also makes for an interesting tour.

But, if all the exertion you want to bother with on holiday, is a few lazy laps in the pool, and a cup of tea on your villa's deck with a curious gazelle for company, then that will not be frowned upon, but rather encouraged. For the ultimate relaxation, however, a short chauffeured trip to the Anantara spa, located in the Desert Islands Resort & Spa – the main hotel – is certainly called for. Probably known for their expertise in spa as much as hotels, the Anantara team know how to ease away urban cares with the help of skilful therapists, natural products, and a fragrant, tranquil environment. Whether it's after a stimulating day of nature walks and wildlife spotting, or a tranquil pool-and-beach afternoon, treat yourself to a soothing massage – it's worth it! GF



WILD THINGS A safari, done in open jeeps, will yield sightings of plenty of wild animals

TRAVEL DIARY

GETTING THERE

Rotana Jet offers convenient direct flights three times a week from Dubai and Abu Dhabi airports. Ticket prices start from Dhs450, visit www.rotanajet.com.

STAYING THERE

Room rates start from Dhs2,200 at Al Yamm Villlas, and Dhs1,600 at Al Sahel Villas (plus taxes and fees). www.anantara.com.

Doha discovery

While new restaurants are opening up in Doha with unfailing regularity, there are some that continue to offer stand-out culinary experiences. Here are some dining stalwarts of the city, that no gourmand should miss. By Sudeshna Ghosh.



Idam, Museum of Islamic Art

This Alain Ducasse restaurant, the French celebrity chef's first in the Middle East, opened to much fanfare at the end of 2012, and has lived up to all the hype since. Located in the top floor of the Museum of Islamic Art, the rather unusual choice of venue suddenly seems to make sense after a meal here – every single aspect of the experience, from the décor to the food, is a work of art.

The Phillipe Starck-designed interiors in a monochromatic colour scheme, subtly interweave the regional heritage into the contemporary chic setting – think oversized white chairs, modern metallic and plush carpets and chargers on the table with Arabic calligraphy. The bright feature bookshelf adding a touch of colour in one corner and the funky light fittings will leave you impressed. But not as much as the food. The carefully designed menu, which also incorporates locally-inspired flavours and ingredients, features dishes that are executed with such assured mastery, that we challenge you not to whip out your phones for that Instagram-perfect shot! With a new chef at the helm, the menu continues to feature the signature dishes such as Marinated bonite fish with lemon gold caviar; and Local fishing with soft/crunchy Egyptian rice, for example – with each dish revealing layer upon layer of surprises concocted with the ultimate finesse in technique. A can't-miss here for first-time diners is of course, the signature tender camel – a slow-braised camel fillet that melts in the mouth – accompanied by duck foie gras black truffle and delicate souffleed potatoes. The desserts continue to be a symphony of culinary art, with a quirky dessert trolley presentation and friendly service that encourages you to 'try some!', while the delicious, thoughtfully designed mocktails mean even the most hardened drinkers will not miss the absence of alcohol in a French fine dining restaurant. *Call +974 4422 4488.*

Spice Market, W Doha



The W Doha is home to some of the city's most popular restaurants, and for good reason. One of the two restaurants that celebrity chef Jean Georges Vongerichten has lent his name to, the Spice Market is a colourful mélange of all things south east Asian, from the interiors to the food. The bright, contemporary and stylish, yet relaxed setting is given an unmistakably Asian touch with paper lantern-style chandeliers, jars of spices and hand-made wooden plates as wall hangings. The menu, inspired by the ubiquitous street food of the region, encompasses everything from Japanese sushi, to Vietnamese rolls and Mongolian lamb satay, but also ventures into fusion territory with dishes like tandoori salmon and spiced chicken samosas. But, unlike other restaurants which attempt such a diverse variety of cuisines, everything on the menu stays true to its roots and is consistently delicious. Whether you're stopping by for a quick sushi lunch, satisfying a craving for Thai curry, or celebrating a special occasion with friends – there is something for everyone here, as long as they enjoy a spice-infused flavour profile – and who doesn't?! *Call +974 4453 5000.*



Jazz at Lincoln Centre, St Regis Doha

Want a little piece of New York recreated in Doha? Then head straight to this jazz club that, in partnership with the original JALC, brings a carefully curated selection of artists on tour to the Middle East. With some of the world's best jazz acts in live performance in the intimate, glamorous venue, the stage is aptly set for the New Orleans-style menu which features a variety of small plates that are perfect for sharing. Highlights include a traditional gumbo (a chicken and sausage stew with okra), jambalaya (a paella-style rice one-pot with seafood and vegetables), Louisiana crab cakes, and of course, cheesy, gooey burgers. All washed down with delicious cocktails, naturally! Don't miss their creatively titled and designed desserts such as the piano cheesecake. With the superlative standard of entertainment unparalleled in the region, it's safe to say you'll come for the music, but you might just stay for the food. *Call +974 4446 0105.*

Photos SUPPLIED



Parisa, Sharq Village & Spa

One of the only restaurants of its kind in Doha, serving Iranian cuisine in a five-star setting, Parisa offers the authentic flavours of Persia. This is the sort of place you'd want to gather your friends and come with, to indulge in an array of more-ish mezze-style dips with hot-off-the-traditional-coal-oven breads, followed by succulent kebabs brought to the table on mini charcoal grills. From fish, to chicken and lamb, the kebabs are a definite highlight. Persian specialties such as slow-cooked meat stews and fragrant, pomegranate-jewelled rice dishes are also available. After all this, if you can leave room for dessert, then don't miss the traditional faloodeh (frozen vermicelli) dessert. *Call +974 4425 6666.* BF

VISITING DOHA?

Where to stay and what to do

Fly in: Qatar Airways offers multiple daily flights between UAE and Doha. www.qatarairways.com.

Check in: The Sharq Village & Spa, a Ritz Carlton hotel, is not only one of the most established hotels in Doha, but also one of the most luxurious. Designed to replicate a traditional village, with meandering alleys and courtyards, the resort celebrates Arabian heritage. The feel of a royal palace carries through inside too, with opulent, yet tasteful furnishings in the spacious rooms, housed in low-rise 'villas', which have their own private courtyards. The hotel is also home to one of the city's finest spas, a sprawling, tranquil sanctuary operated by the world renowned group Six Senses, designed with organic shapes and natural materials. The private beach fronting the resort, and mini souq shopping area, plus leading restaurants – including the afore-mentioned Parisa and signature seafood outlet Al Dana – complete the complement of facilities that make this the ultimate choice for someone looking for a luxe weekend in Doha. Room rates start from QAR1395, www.ritzcarlton.com/sharqvillage.

Check out: Katara Cultural Village This open-air village-style cluster of restaurants and art galleries is located by the seaside in the trendy new West Bay area. Katara is the place to visit over the weekend, whether it's to bring out the art fanatic in you at an exhibition viewing, for a cup of tea at one of the many cafes, or to simply stroll by the seaside with a plate of fish and chips in hand. A selection of beach activities are also on offer at Katara beach. Visit www.katara.net.



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Families gathered for a weekend of foodie fun

Everyone enjoyed the alfresco weather



Celeb chef Ramzi Choueiri prepared gourmet delights



Entertainment for everyone



The Qatar Airways Cookng theatre was a hit



The local band provided great entertainment



All eyes on the chefs performing at the Cooking Theatre

Culinary celebrations in Doha

This 2014 Qatar International Food Festival, held last month, was a colourful mélange of good food, dining experiences, and entertainment for everyone. We look back at some of the highlights of the event.

The fifth edition of Qatar International Food Festival, held at the Museum of Islamic Art Park in Doha, brought together casual and fine dining restaurants from around the city in one location. The festival took place over four days between March 20-23, and featured a selection of zones including the Qatar Airways cooking theatre and over 50 food stalls, with BBC Good Food Middle East, available in Doha since May last year, being a media partner. Each year, the festival highlights one country and its culture, and this year Brazil took the spotlight, with Brazilian dancers and footballers showcasing their talent on the entertainment stages across the park. Visitors tried a selection of specialties from restaurants, and watched cooking demonstrations from celebrity chefs including TV personalities Ramzi Choueiri, and Aysha Al Tamimi. A kid's area with mascots and a selection of games and activities were also available for little ones in the Family Zone. Amongst all this were thrilling dining experiences such as Dinner in the sky (See Sky-high dining), Dinner on a Dhow by Souq Waqif Boutique Hotels, and the BBQ Donut in association with the Diplomatic Club, where visitors got to enjoy barbecue dishes while floating in a donut on water. The annual festival is becoming increasingly popular with residents and expats alike, and this year saw over 30,000 visitors over the course of the four days. We can't wait to see what next year's edition has in store!

Text by NICOLA MONTEATH. Photographs supplied and by writer

Amateur cooks battled it out at a challenge hosted by Oryx Rotana

The Museum of Islamic Art was a stunning backdrop to the event

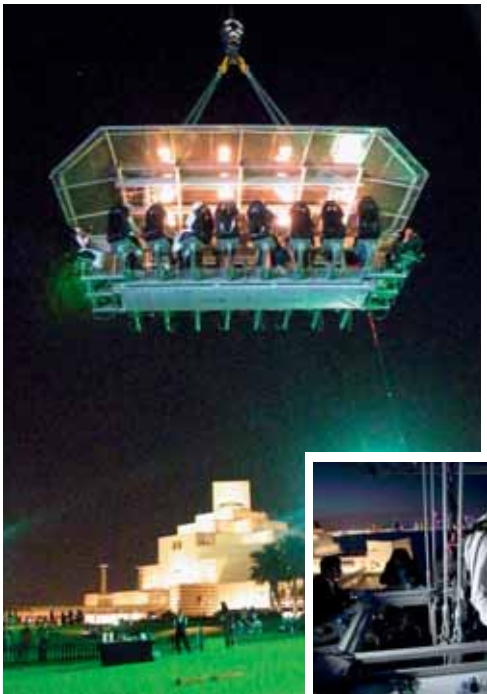
Everyone loves popcorn!

Italian pizza acrobats were fun to watch

The festival area was decorated to represent the local culture

We offered a special discount for new Doha subscribers at the BBC Good Food ME stand

The festivities continued from afternoon into evening





FRIED & TESTED

SKY-HIGH DINING

Dinner in the Sky, one of the main attractions at this year's festival, gave guests a one-of-a-kind thrilling experience. We were strapped into race-car style seats before the entire table was pulled 40 metres above ground level by a crane. Slightly anxious at first, we relaxed as we took in the mesmerising views of the gorgeous Museum of Islamic Art that was lit up at night, Doha's skyline in the distance, and the festival taking place below – definitely a picture-perfect moment! We chatted away to the chefs from Renaissance Hotel, as they prepped our three-course meal and served them from the counter in the centre of the elevated platform. We were asked to choose from a selection of three dishes for each course before being seated, and my choices of foie gras for starters – served in a small mason jar with toast - a beef fillet with steamed vegetables and gravy for mains, and a passion fruit panna cotta pyramid for dessert were all devoured. As I found myself beign gradually lowered back to terra firma along with the other guests, I savoured the moment – it's definitely an experience worth trying! For more information on the experience, visit www.dinnerinthesky.com.

- Nicola Monteath

WIN!

A luxury weekend break at **The St. Regis Doha**, worth over **QR8,500**







One lucky winner can enjoy a lavish two-night stay for two, with private pool-side cabana access, breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Escape to The St. Regis Doha to indulge in the ultimate in relaxation and extravagance. The hotel, which overlooks the Arabian Gulf, features an Olympic-size pool with air-conditioned cabanas, a private beach, watersport activities, a fully equipped gym, and the Remède spa, which makes it perfect for those looking to get away from the humdrum of the city.

The hotel is a true culinary destination and features ten signature restaurants and lounges including Astor Grill, Jazz at Lincoln Center Doha (read our review on p86), internationally renowned Chinese chain Hakkasan, Lebanese restaurant Al Sultan Brahim, Gordon Ramsay, and Opal by Gordon Ramsay, all-day dining Vine Restaurant, Vintage and Sarab Lounges for coffee and cakes, and the Caribbean-inspired pool restaurant Oyster Bay and Bar.

One lucky winner and their partner can enjoy a two-night stay in a sea-view room, plus use of an air-conditioned pool-side cabana complete with a private jacuzzi for one day, with three-course lunch and mocktails, breakfast at Vine Restaurant on both days, and a VIP table with a three-course dinner and bottle of wine at Jazz at Lincoln Center Doha.

Scan this QR code to go straight to our website.

Log on bbcgoodfoodme.com to enter this competition and simply answer this question:

How many restaurants does Gordon Ramsay have at The St. Regis Doha?

*Terms & conditions apply. Employees of CPI Media Group are not eligible to enter. Winners will be selected on random basis from correct entries.

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The beach resort's outlets include Tides, Zaitoun, C View café, Latitude bar and Waves.

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This Abu Dhabi hotel's restaurants include LaPiazza, Harvesters Pub, Chequers, Tipar Bar, Cappucino Royal Café and Pool Corner.

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TILAL LIWA HOTEL
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BBC GoodFood MIDDLE EAST

In next month's issue

Summer survival
with cooling drinks and ices

Plus! Ramadan prep tips

ALSO FIND



✳ Modern vegetarian recipes



✳ New ways with pasta



✳ The lowdown on the Raw Food diet



✳ Tempting desserts

ON SALE FROM JUNE 1st WEEK

Competitions

Fabulous prizes, from dining vouchers to event passes, up for grabs.



WIN! DINING VOUCHERS FOR THE SATURDAY BARBECUE AT QUANTUM POOL LOUNGE, THE H HOTEL, WORTH DHS1,600.
Four lucky winners can receive a Dhs400 voucher for two each, to indulge in The H Dubai's BBQ by Quantum on Saturday afternoons. Enjoy a selection of salads, grilled meats and seafood from the buffet spread, as well as shisha in a variety of flavours, while relaxing by the poolside.

WIN! A WEEKEND STAY FOR TWO AT SHERATON DUBAI CREEK HOTEL AND TOWERS, WORTH DHS1,600.
One lucky winner can enjoy a one-night stay for two at the Executive Suite of this newly renovated five-star hotel nestled by the Dubai Creek. The package also includes a sumptuous buffet breakfast at Hatta restaurant.





WIN! DINING VOUCHERS AT DON ALFONSO 1890, SHANGRI-LA HOTEL DUBAI, WORTH DHS1,500.
Three lucky winners can win a Dhs500 dining voucher each to this renowned Italian restaurant – its Italian outpost has two Michelin stars – which recently debuted in the Middle East. Diners can savour contemporary and classic Italian dishes at this glamorous restaurant that has an open plan kitchen as the focal point.

DOHA competitions



WIN! DINNER FOR TWO AT ASIA LIVE RESTAURANT, DOHA MARRIOTT HOTEL, WORTH QR500.
One lucky winner and a dining partner can indulge in fusion cuisine from Japan, Thailand, Vietnam and Mongolia at this Asian restaurant. Try freshly prepared sushi or fragrant and flavourful curries and stir-fries, while watching the chefs in action at the teppenyaki grill.

WIN! BRUNCH FOR TWO AT ISAAN, GRAND HYATT DOHA, WORTH QR1,120.
Get a feel of the Thai Chatuchak weekend market at this Friday brunch held in this award-winning restaurant. One winner and a friend can fill their plates with authentic dishes from the live cooking stations and market-like stalls, and dine in this lively, bustling setting on a Friday afternoon.





WIN! BRUNCH FOR FOUR AT MOVENPICK HOTEL IBN BATUTA GATE, WORTH DHS1,200.
Take three friends along to this extravagant Friday brunch, where all the hotel's outlets come together in the main lobby atrium, Al Bahou, decorated with 88 Moroccan lanterns cascading down from the ceiling, to enjoy a lavish spread. Try a selection of cold cuts and Italian, Chinese, Arabic and Indian cuisine from various food stations. A dedicated dessert and cheese room is available as well, and kids can enjoy at the play area which has a movie theatre and bouncy castle.

To stand a chance to win these prizes, visit our competitions page on www.bbcgoodfoodme.com, or simply scan this QR code with your mobile to go directly to the website, and answer the simple questions.

*Terms & conditions apply. Employees of CPI Media Group and entrants below 21 years old are not eligible to enter. Winners will be selected on random basis from correct entries.

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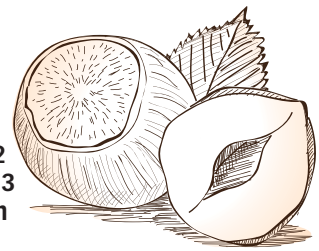
Helping you connect to the UAE'S foodie community, one blog post at a time.

25-year old **RANA YASSINE** from Lebanon was born and bred in Dubai, and now works as a Twitter Account manager for Connect Ads. She lives in Jumeirah with her parents, twin brothers and grandmother, 'Tata'. Rana is on a mission to promote healthy food and does this via her food blog Zaatar and Quinoa, where she showcases a selection of nutritious international dishes. But it isn't just cooking and healthy eating she is fond of, Rana also enjoys Pilates a few times a week to keep fit.

About the blog

On **Zaatarandquinoa.com,** I feature healthy recipes that don't cost an arm and leg, or take hours to make every day. I launched the blog in 2013, and the aim was to always keep the recipes simple and easy to create, but to make sure they all taste great and are actually good for the body too. I try to be as healthy as I can be, both in my lifestyle, and in what I eat, and I like that through my blog, my readers can find a number of nutritious recipes such as vegan fudge brownies and whole-wheat vegan banana bread.

Top tip



To peel hazelnuts quickly, boil it in 3 tablespoons of baking soda and 2 cups of water for 3 minutes – the skin comes right off.

A big day!

I'm getting married this month in Cyprus, and my menu for the wedding comprises of a mixture of Mediterranean dishes – I had to have a few healthy options! Guests will also get a bottle of Cypriot wine as a memento.



A super-easy bake

My Five-ingredient banana coconut cookies, which are the perfect combination of crunchy and sweet. To make it, blend together **2 eggs**, **1 ripe banana** and **1 apple** until smooth. Add **1 cup of raw almonds** and **1 cup of unsweetened shredded coconut** and mix until there are no lumps. Place the dough balls on a baking tray and bake at 160C for 30 mins.

"I use dates as a substitute for sugar when baking, and no one can tell there's no sugar at all."

Favourite cuisine

I love all Asian cuisines, but Thai has got to be one of my favourites! I try to incorporate the use of coconut milk in a lot of soups, and love cooking Thai red curry.

Culinary icons

Julia Child! She didn't start cooking until she was 32, which goes to show it's never too late to start learning anything in life.

Food luxury

Caviar! It's not always in my pantry, but when it is, I cannot get enough of it. I eat it on toast with a squeeze of lemon.



Text by NICOLA MONTEATH | Photographs SUPPLIED

La Dolce Vita

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March into Certo this month and experience the perfect “La Dolce Vita” Friday with a refreshing brunch offering mouth watering Italian delicacies alongside live entertainment. From home made antipasti’s to pizzas baked in a wood –fire oven together with a massive assortment of risotto, seafood and meat selections served straight up at your table with free flowing bubbly or any other beverage of your choice or delve into our massive dessert buffet happening **every Friday from noon till 3.30 pm**

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